

Sealing Unused/Unsealed Wells—

An Effective Way to Protect the City's Drinking Water

The City of Hector is currently implementing its WELLHEAD PROTECTION (WHP) PLAN in order to proactively to protect the source of drinking water for the municipal system. The city currently obtains its drinking water from number 3 & 4 wells that draw water from a groundwater aquifer that is both shallow and has little protection against contamination from land use activities on the ground's surface. One of the WHP plan's most effective contamination protection initiatives includes the identification and sealing of "unused/unsealed wells" that are within the designated wellhead protection area.

WHAT IS AN UNUSED/UNSEALED WELL?

An unused/unsealed well is a well that is no longer used, is not sealed, and may be buried or forgotten. Sealing is the process of clearing an unused well of debris and filling the well with a special material called grout.

HOW DO UNUSED WELLS THREATEN THE DRINKING WATER?

As a well ages, the well cover may be broken, the casing may rust, joints may leak, the pump may become stuck in the well, or the well may fill with debris. An unused, unsealed well can provide an open channel between the land surface and an aquifer. An unused well can act as a drain – allowing surface water runoff, debris, and other contaminants to enter the groundwater, and the municipal drinking water supply.

WHAT DOES THE LAW REQUIRE?

By law, a well must be in use, be under a maintenance permit, or be sealed by a licensed contractor.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT THE DRINKING WATER?

In the upcoming months, the City of Hector will provide additional information about unused/unsealed wells, attempt to locate these wells within the drinking water protection area identified in the city's WELLHEAD PROTECTION PLAN, and obtain funding through the Minnesota Department of Health's Source Water Protection Grant Program to seal any identified unused/unsealed wells. In order to assist the city with this effort, you can continue to read information provided on this topic, evaluate your own property for the presence of unused/unsealed wells, and participate in the city's future well sealing efforts.

If you have questions regarding the City of Hector effort to identify and seal unused/unsealed wells, please contact City Hall, (320) 848-2122.