

## Reasons to Abandon Your Contaminated Well

This document is provided for residents who have PFAS in their drinking water well, have been offered a low or no cost connection, or have connected to a municipal water supply, and now have the responsibility to abandon their contaminated drinking water well.

### OVERVIEW

If PFAS has been detected in your private drinking water well and you have made the switch to municipal water, your next step is to properly abandon and plug your old well. Continuing to use contaminated water for non-drinking water purposes puts you, your family, and even neighboring properties at risk. While you may no longer be drinking the contaminated water now that you have municipal water, the exposure to contaminated water to yourself and others will continue to occur if the well is not properly abandoned.

### WHY A CONTAMINATED WELL NEEDS TO BE ABANDONED

#### It's required by law.

A contaminated well can pose a health or safety hazard; therefore, it must be properly plugged as an abandoned well. The Michigan Water Well Construction Code<sup>1</sup> requires that contaminated wells, posing a health or safety hazard, must be plugged when municipal water is installed. It is your responsibility as a well owner to properly plug your contaminated well. Abandoned wells left unplugged may be a liability for you.

#### Even if you do not plan to use it, failing to plug your old well could still pose a threat to the groundwater resources.

An un-plugged well can become a direct conduit for contamination spilled on the surface to flow down the well into the aquifer, allowing more contamination to spread beneath the ground surface. If that happens, there is the potential to impact other drinking water wells.

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<sup>1</sup> Groundwater Quality Control Act, Part 127 of Act 368 of 1978.

## Local health departments can require abandonment of contaminated wells under their specific health codes.

In addition to the state Water Well Construction Code, local health departments may have their own requirements about plugging and abandoning contaminated wells.

## What will it cost to abandon my well in the future?

If you do not abandon your well now but choose to do so in the future, you will be responsible for the cost of abandonment. Costs could vary depending on the construction and depth of your individual water well, but generally range from \$1,000-\$2,500. You should consult a local well driller to get an estimate. There may be grants and loans available now to cover the amount it costs to properly plug a well.



## You are required to disclose a contaminated well if you sell your house.

State law requires that sellers disclose knowledge of a contaminated well when the property is put up for sale. Disclosure is required by law pursuant to Michigan's Seller Disclosure Act<sup>2</sup>. A home with an existing contaminated private well may be harder to sell and could decrease the value of your property. By properly plugging your contaminated well now, and having municipal water, the impact to your home's overall value would be minimized.

## Watering your lawn with contaminated well water will contaminate the soil.

Even if the soil on and around your property is not already contaminated by PFAS, you can contaminate the soil on your property when you water your lawn with contaminated water. The PFAS will build up in the soil over time, further contaminating your property.

## Using a contaminated well to water your garden means PFAS have the potential to be taken up by the fruits and vegetables that you are growing.

If you water your garden with contaminated water, the fruits and vegetables grown there can absorb PFAS from the water and soil. This means that when you eat this produce, you may be exposed to PFAS.

## You could be placing your neighbors at risk.

If you continue to use your contaminated well for irrigation, you could be placing neighbors at risk by spreading contaminated water to their property via runoff, by sprinklers, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Act 92 of 1993, and section 20116 of Part 201, Environmental Remediation, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of 1994, as amended.

## You could be drawing more contamination to your property.

If you continue to use a contaminated well, you could be drawing the groundwater contamination closer to your property and well, potentially putting yourself at greater risk. Changes to groundwater withdrawal may affect PFAS contaminant distribution over time.

## Continuing to use contaminated water from your hose means that anyone who drinks out of it could be ingesting PFAS.

In the hot summer months, it can be tempting to allow kids or animals to drink out of your hose outdoors. Although the water may look clear, it does not mean that it is safe to drink. If you have not abandoned your well, anyone who drinks from your hose could be directly ingesting PFAS.

## Using contaminated water to fill a pool could lead to accidentally swallowing PFAS.

Although most swimmers try their best not to swallow any pool water, some swallowing can occur when enjoying a pool. Basic pool chemicals do not eliminate PFAS contamination in the water, meaning anyone who swallows the pool water could be ingesting PFAS.

**For questions about your drinking water, contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) hotline at 800-648-6942 or your local health department.**

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