

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**WELL DECOMMISSIONING**

**(NO.)  
CODE 351**

**DEFINITION**

The sealing and permanent closure of a water well no longer in use.

**PURPOSES**

This practice serves to:

- Prevent entry of vermin, debris, or other foreign substances into the well or well bore hole;
- Eliminate the physical hazard of an open hole to people, animals, and farm machinery;
- Prevent entry of contaminated surface water into well and migration of contaminants into unsaturated (vadose) zone or saturated zone
- Prevent the commingling of chemically or physically different ground waters between separate water bearing zones.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to any drilled, dug, driven, bored, or otherwise constructed vertical water well determined to have no further beneficial use.

This practice does not apply to wells that were used for waste disposal, or if evidence of contamination still exists. This practice does not apply to wells that contain contaminant levels that exceed state or federal water quality standards. Treatment of contamination source(s) is required before a well is decommissioned.

**CRITERIA**

The NRCS in Minnesota does not maintain criteria for well decommissioning (sealing). Minnesota Rules 725 provide the criteria for sealing abandoned wells in Minnesota.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

This practice may be part of a ground water protection system that includes water and chemical management practices.

To the extent practicable, an abandoned well should be decommissioned in a manner that restores the original hydrogeologic conditions of the well site and does not preclude the use of the site from future land management practices.

Decommissioning requires special consideration of specific geological, biological, physical, and climatic conditions, the chemical composition of the surrounding soil, rock, and ground water at the well site, and the well's construction practices. All procedures, fill and sealing materials need to be selected according to these considerations.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for decommissioning abandoned water wells shall be consistent with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purposes. The licensed well driller as required by Minnesota Rules 4725 shall complete an abandoned well report.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The practice site shall be inspected periodically to ensure that the decommissioned well and the adjacent area have not settled or eroded, or are otherwise adversely disturbed. The well site and adjacent ground surfaces shall be maintained in a manner that prevents ponding of surface runoff on the site.