

Abandoned Oil & Gas Well Program

If I find a well on my property that appears to be abandoned, what should I do?

You should access the KCC's abandoned well reporting form. To complete the form, you must provide information including, but not limited to, the legal description of the acreage where the well is located and your contact information. A field agent may contact you for additional information to facilitate the KCC's investigation.

Who is responsible for plugging abandoned wells on my property?

That question must be answered on a case-by-case basis after reviewing available records concerning the well. However in general, the current or last operator of the well is responsible for properly plugging the well. If no responsible party for plugging the well can be located, the Conservation Division has a fund for plugging abandoned wells. When wells are plugged using money from this fund, plugging is based on a priority system considering the wells age, construction, effect on the environment and effect on public safety.

As a landowner, can I be responsible for plugging abandoned wells on my property?

K.S.A. 55-179 makes landowners responsible for plugging wells on their property only if the landowner has tampered with the well or assumed responsibility for the well in writing. As a landowner, you should never knock over or cutoff above ground well casing or bury wells. Not only can doing so be dangerous, it may make you a responsible party to plug the well. If you find abandoned wells on your property, report them using the abandoned well reporting form.

When is a well considered to be abandoned?

Legally a well is abandoned when the well has not been in use for over 90 days for wells not fully equipped for immediate service and 365 days for fully equipped wells and the well has not been granted temporary abandonment status by the Conservation Division.

If I'm the landowner but not the mineral owner and there are wells operating on my property, how can I find out who the operator is?

If the wells are oil wells and there are tanks on the property associated with the wells, there should be an operator sign on or near the tanks with information about the current operator. If the well is a gas well, there may be no identification with the well. You can call the Conservation Division or the appropriate district office for assistance. You will need to provide the legal description for the well's location.

Why are there so many abandoned wells found in Kansas?

Oil and gas development in the state started in the late 1800's and generally proceeded from the Eastern part of Kansas west. Although there was some regulation of oil and gas development starting in the late 1930's, comprehensive regulation did not begin until the mid-1980's. Over the years numerous wells drilled from the late 1800's through the 1970's were abandoned without being properly plugged. Over time, many of these wells were buried or overgrown with trees and brush that make them hard to find even today.

To report the location of an abandoned oil or gas well, contact the appropriate KCC District Field office. Plugging of abandoned wells is on a priority basis. Wells having ongoing or potential for environmental damage or public safety considerations receive the highest priority.

District Field Offices are:

District 1

Dodge City, Kansas (Southwest Kansas)
620) 225-8888

District 2

Wichita, Kansas (South & North Central Kansas)
(316) 630-4000

District 3

Chanute, Kansas (Eastern Kansas)
(620) 432-2300

District 4

Hays, Kansas (Northwestern Kansas)
(785) 625-0550

24-hour Emergency

Patrick Shields
(316) 337-6035 (Primary)
(316) 772-8955 (After hours)



Statewide distribution of state funded abandoned wells plugged since 1996