

From December 7, 2025 General Membership Meeting
TALK BY CHANCEY CHAMBERS: "Winterizing Your Well"

A bit on terminology: you may see well professionals refer to "AGL" or above ground level. This is also sometimes referred to as "AGS." Also, you may see "BGL," which stands for below ground level, aka, "BGS." Winterizing the well is focused on AGL areas of the well.

The Pressure Switch regulates most of the system (which should be set to between 30-50 pounds of pressure.) If water freezes, the Pressure Release Valve (PRV) may vent (or drip) the water as it freezes. This is normal activity for the valve. Sometimes people see this valve leaking and may try to tighten it to stop the leak. However, this action blocks the valve from venting the pressure, which could lead to pressure build up in the well system - which could blow the pump clean off - !! Be sure to always have a pressure relief valve on your well for just this reason.

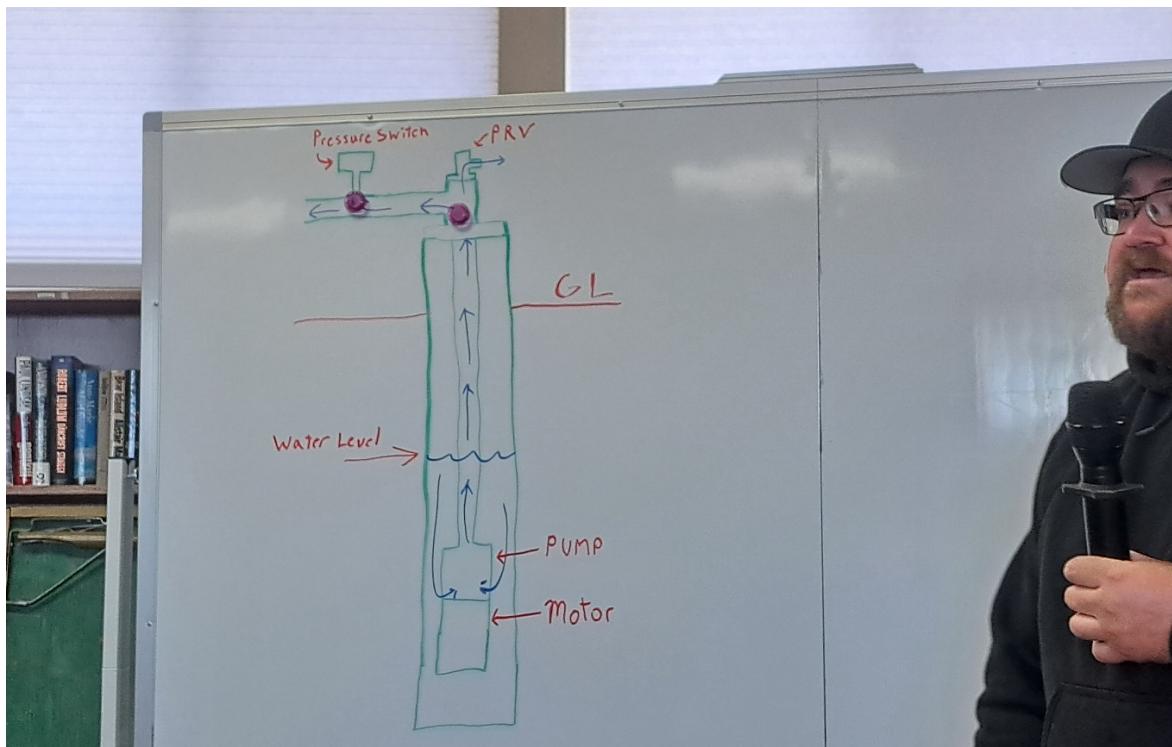


Diagram of a domestic well. *Photo by Steve Harrison*

To protect your well from freezing, cover all of the well parts that are above ground. This includes the well head, the well cap and casing, and pipes. A blanket can be used to cover the well head/cap.

Also cover all exposed pipes with an insulating foam sleeve or insulating tape (available in hardware stores). Wrapping pipes with blankets or old towels can be helpful. If a hard freeze is expected, it might also be wise to cover your pressure tank, which can split in a hard freeze.

If your well is in a well house, a lightbulb may provide enough warmth to stave off a freeze. Or, in a hard freeze, some people have used a small space heater to get through the night when the weather is the coldest. Out here in Wonder Valley, we don't usually have this deep of freeze.

Generally, well water is around 76 degrees. Running the warmer well water through the pipes at night (for example, turning the kitchen faucet on a little and letting it run all night) could also help keep the pipes open. As long as a little water is moving through the pipes, it could help keep them open.

A bit of trivia: metal pipes will split in a freeze faster than PVC pipes. PVC has a bit of flexibility, whereas metal pipes do not.

"ASK A WELL DRILLER with Chancey Chambers" – general questions related to domestic wells.

Question: how often does the Pressure Relief Valve (PRV) last? Chance: the PRV should be replaced every 5-7 years. It is not an expensive part (around \$50). Also, some people have tried increasing the pressure in the well as a way of testing it. This is not advised as the increased pressure in the system could cause it to blow. Comment: Yes, this happened to my well! The PRV saved the well. Chance replied, this is called a 'simulated freeze,' which can damage the well. There is a little screw at the top of the pressure switch that some people tighten when they see a "leak" – but, the 'leak' is actually the PRV doing its job of releasing the internal pressure of the system. The system needs to be able to vent the pressure.

Question: are there different water caches in Wonder Valley? Some people have hot water wells, some cold. Chance: yes, there are various underground fault systems that the government hasn't mapped, but the well drillers know where these faults are. Well drillers will not drill near a fault line. The reason some wells draw hot water is because they are in an area that is near faults, where underground pressure builds up and heats the water. There are volcano's within about 25 miles of here (Amboy Crater), that, while they are not active at this time, there is underground heating caused by the friction of the faults moving against each other, which is what causes the water to be hot. Question: is there a higher density of faults in Wonder Valley? Chance: yes. There are about 3 hot water zones in Wonder Valley, especially on Wilson Road, where some wells draw water that is up to 150 degrees. Joe suggests maybe

we should invite a geologist to come talk with us. Chance suggests a hydrogeologist would be best to talk about our water subbasins.

Question: we have 2 properties that have a road going through the middle. One property has a well, the other does not. Can the two properties share the well? Chance: you can, but the well would need to be designated as a Community Well, and will need to be permitted through the county. Community wells have additional regulations that single household domestic wells do not, such as being a deeper well and having better sealing on the well cap. A community member also commented that if the 2 properties are adjoining (ie, share a common boundary) they can be consolidated into one (larger) parcel. That will also reduce your property taxes.