

Abandoned Wells and Mine Safety information For the Hunter and Outdoorsman

Woodlands Hazards

There are many hazards of the forest other than snakes, insects and poisonous plants. Natural hazards would be stump holes, exposed roots, dead trees, snags, insects, snakes and poisonous plants. Stump holes, roots and poisonous plants can often be avoided by watching where you step and being aware of the surroundings. Standing dead trees and snags are common hazards in the forest. They should be avoided particularly on days when the wind is gusting.

Mining History

Mining was booming business in many parts of our nation. Underground mines with ventilation shafts were used as early as the mid 1800's as a means to remove coal and ore. Likewise rural homesteads were a common site around the turn of the century. Hand dug wells were often utilized a water source for these rural farms and communities. Abandoned mine shafts and water wells can now create a hidden hazard.



Awareness of the “man made” hazards can also help in preventing an injury. Common man made hazards are abandoned water wells that were left uncovered, open mine shafts, downed fencing and rubbish piles. Piles of rubbish with broken glass, rusty nails, and sharp pieces of metal create their own hazards but can also indicate an abandoned house site. When evidence of a primitive house site is found an abandoned well may be nearby.

Communication is Vital

Phones and radios should be kept in good working order and fully charged prior to participating in an outdoor excursion. **Remember:** Outdoorsmen should keep the radio or phone on them when in the forest so a call for help can be placed if needed.

“Safety Buddy” Needed

Be sure to establish a “Safety Buddy” prior to leaving home. Give good detailed information regarding your location when heading to remote areas.

Increase Awareness

The following photos indicate areas where **increased** awareness should be used due to the possibility of abandoned / open water wells or mine shafts:

Note the old growth trees in this plantation indicating an old home site and the possibility of a well:



Note the old growth trees and hedge bushes indicating a primitive home site in this forest:



Note: This old home site is identifiable by old growth hardwood trees. A closer look revealed other evidence of a home / farm site. This would be a likely spot for an abandoned water well. Heightened awareness is needed in this area.



Old Plow Point

Note: Old roofing tin indicating a primitive home site.



Note the old water cistern / water trough at this site indicating an old home / farm site. An abandoned well could be in this area requiring heightened awareness.



Note: This is an abandoned water well that was once covered with boards and wood (now rotten). Avoid stepping on old boards as they might be covering a well or shaft!



Attention should be given to geological evidence of mining. Raise awareness in areas with a history of mining. Old cables or metal, spoil piles, slate rock and abnormal amounts of surface rock can indicate a site had mine activity on it.

Spoil piles (a.k.a.: muck, tailings) require heightened awareness of abandoned shafts:



Red rock and slate rock can be found around coal mine sites and can be used as an indicator to raise awareness for mine shafts.



Redrock Tailings above, slate to the right.



Be attentive to your work area and keep your "Safety Buddy" aware of your location. Check in periodically. Be diligent in notifying your "Safety Buddy" any time you make a change in location. Note: Be specific with the details of your location. End of the day "all clear" communications are vitally important for the avid outdoorsman. If you do not hear from your Safety Buddy call them. If you are unable to reach them take action to be sure they are safe and sound.

Rural areas that now make great hunting locations are known for mining activities and primitive home sites. When walking in thick underbrush be sure to advance slowly and take the time to determine the ground conditions that exist under vines and vegetation.

Report Any Mine Shafts or Wells

For the safety of forestry workers and other outdoorsmen flag off and report any wells or mine shafts to your lease manager.

Many hazards exist in the woods. Both natural and man made. While enjoying the great outdoors remember to **Look Up, Look Down, Look Around!**