



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FACT SHEET

Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources

Created by the Legislature in 1915, the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) ensures the safe exploration and development of energy resources. It oversees the drilling, operation and closure of oil, gas and geothermal wells – an important step in protecting public safety and protecting the environment. The Division also oversees enhanced recovery projects that try to maximize production from the state's oil reservoirs. DOGGR provides many other services including:

Well Records, Field Maps, & Production Statistics

DOGGR is the clearinghouse for information about the state's oil, natural gas, and geothermal industries. More than 190,000 well records, production and injection statistics, well logs and field maps are available at five district offices. Some of this information is also available on the Department of Conservation website. This information is valuable not only to energy resource companies and consultants, but to local governments, land-use planners and the public.

Blowout Prevention

Blowouts occur when natural formation fluids – gas, oil, or water – flow uncontrolled from a well bore. If the flow isn't controlled, formation fluids can contaminate the surface and resources are lost. In serious instances, blowouts can be a threat to public safety and the environment. Controlling the pressure in a well bore is the key to preventing blowouts. DOGGR monitors proper installation and maintenance of blowout prevention equipment, closely regulating the design of well casing, an important well control component.

Idle & Orphan Well Plugging and Abandonment

When a well is not capable of producing, it must be shut-in properly and, eventually, plugged and abandoned. Otherwise, it will deteriorate and corrode, potentially becoming an environmental and safety concern. Usually, operators shut down wells properly under DOGGR supervision. A well is considered orphaned when there's no one to take responsibility for plugging and abandoning it. In such cases, DOGGR steps in and does the work with industry-provided funds. DOGGR is authorized to spend up to \$2 million per year to plug orphan wells. To

reduce the number of idle wells that may become orphaned, the Department of Conservation sponsored Assembly Bill 2729, which was signed by Governor Brown and will be implemented over the next several years. This measure increases the fees an operator must pay to keep a well idle, providing new financial disincentives to operators maintain idle wells. The Department believes the new idle well fees will encourage operators to plug and abandon many idle wells or reactivate idle wells that may be capable of producing economic amounts of oil and natural gas.

Geothermal Wells

DOGGR regulates the state's approximately 1000 geothermal wells, as well as the potential sites of new wells. California is the largest generator of electricity from geothermal energy in the United States. The Geysers in Sonoma and Lake counties is the largest geothermal field in the world. In 2015, California received over 6 percent of its electrical energy from in-state geothermal resources (about 13,000 gigawatt-hours).

Land Use Development On or Near Old Wells

DOGGR retains well records dating back to the early 1900s, which allows the Division to conduct a well record review and may compare a well abandonment with current abandonment standards. DOGGR has authority to order the re-abandonment of any well that is hazardous or that poses a danger to health, the environment or natural resources.

Offshore

Oil production from offshore wells accounts for roughly 15 percent of California's total oil production. Although there is a leasing moratorium in state waters, DOGGR permits the drilling, re-works, and abandonments of existing wells in state waters extending three miles from the coastline. DOGGR's Cypress, Ventura, and Orcutt offices attend to offshore matters, including islands and platforms, in addition to wells directionally drilled onshore to oil and gas fields offshore.

Underground Injection Control

Because California's oil fields are mature (production began in the early 1900s in some locations), many of California's wells need stimulation to extract the remaining resources. DOGGR has state and federal authority to regulate injection to assist in oil

recovery. As new technologies emerge to enhance oil recovery, DOGGR strives to adjust regulations to continually ensure the safety of the environment and the resources.

Well Stimulation Regulations (California Senate Bill No. 4)

Effective January 1, 2014, DOGGR became responsible for regulating the oil and gas industry's use of well stimulation techniques, including hydraulic fracturing, under the terms of Senate Bill 4 (SB 4). DOGGR created permanent regulations that went into effect July 2015. The goal of these regulations is to provide the public with information about when and where well stimulation is used, to protect public health and the environment, and to give the oil and gas industry a clear set of standards for which it will be accountable when using those techniques.

Development of Natural Gas Storage Regulations

The Department is currently in the process of developing Underground Gas Storage (UGS) specific regulations that expand upon existing Underground Injection Control (UIC) regulations, emergency regulations adopted by the Department in February 2016, and the requirements found in Senate Bill 887 (Pavley, Chapter 673 statutes of 2016). Prior to the approval

of the emergency regulations, the UIC program broadly covered UGS wells. However, the UIC program and UGS program have differing and distinct concerns and practices that should be considered separately. The regulations address a more complete regulatory scheme tailored specifically to underground gas storage wells, and actions already undertaken by operators (voluntarily and by order of the Oil and Gas Supervisor). The proposed regulations include new or revised requirements pertaining testing and monitoring, well construction standards that ensure gas storage wells maintain integrity over time, and risk management plans.

DOGGR Renewal Plan

A Renewal Plan was developed in 2015 to guide the following two years of the Division's reform and accelerate progress underway since 2012. Since its establishment in 1915, DOGGR has evolved from focused regulation of oil and gas industry practices to including protection of public health, safety and the environment. This expanded plan requires a renewal in policies, practices and regulations administered by DOGGR to ensure they match the heightened expectations of today's society. [For more information or to download a copy of the Renewal Plan, visit the DOGGR section of the Department of Conservation website.](#)



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