



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

News Release

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STATE PERMANENTLY SEALS DESERTED OIL WELLS IN LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD

LOS ANGELES – The California Department of Conservation announced today that two decades-old residential oil wells – deserted by irresponsible operators and seeping small amounts of natural gas – have been permanently sealed.

“We’d like to thank the residents for their patience and cooperation while we worked to seal these wells and prevent this natural gas seepage from becoming a safety issue,” said Department of Conservation Director David Bunn. “The owners of these wells walked away, so the state stepped in. The end result is a safer street for these families.”

The permanently sealed wells are located in the front yards of two residences on Firmin Street in Echo Park, which used to be part of the century-old Los Angeles City Oil Field. While these wells seeped small amounts of natural gas, they posed no immediate danger to residents. Properly sealing the wells took several weeks and residents were impacted by parking changes, noise and dust during the work.

“We want to thank the Department of Conservation’s Division of Oil and Gas for making this project a priority with its limited funds to seal deserted wells,” said Rosalinda Morales, a community advocate. “Our neighborhood has borne the brunt of decades-old oil operations, which left behind poorly sealed wells. Sealing these brings us a huge sense of relief.”

City and state officials went door-to-door in the neighborhood and held two community meetings to discuss the work before and during the process. Daily progress updates were posted to a [web page](#) dedicated to the project.

In 2012 and 2015, the Department of Conservation’s Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources issued remediation orders to the last known operators of the wells – Manley Energy Company and H. Rogalske – but both parties were unresponsive and could not be located. State law requires oil well owners to properly seal wells after they finish producing resources from them. While many oil well owners and businesses comply with these requirements, some, unfortunately, do not. Since 1977, the Division has plugged more than 1,350 orphan

The Department of Conservation’s mission is to balance today’s needs with tomorrow’s challenges and foster intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California’s energy, land, and mineral resources.

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wells at a cost of more than \$27 million. The oil and gas industry pays an assessment to fund this work. The Division currently is authorized to spend up to \$2 million per year to remediate orphan wells.

Many parts of Los Angeles are built atop former oil fields and there are an estimated 900 orphan wells within the city limits. Residents can view the location of oil wells, and the status of those wells, in relation to their homes by utilizing the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources' WellFinder tool at: <http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/doggr/#close>. Residents are reminded to call 9-1-1 anytime they smell gas.

Residents in the Los Angeles area who think they have an old oil or gas well on their property can email DOC's Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources for more information at:

DOGDIST1@conservation.ca.gov. Sites that are leaking or close to residential or environmentally sensitive areas are prioritized for remediation.

Earlier this year, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed legislation to help address the issue of orphan wells, including:

- ◆ Assembly Bill 2729 by Assemblymember Das Williams (D-Santa Barbara), which improves idle well testing to protect groundwater resources, requires operators to plug specified percentages of their long-term idle wells, and increases fees that fund hazardous orphan well abatement.

- ◆ Assembly Bill 2756 by Assemblymember Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond), which among other things enhances enforcement authority for the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources, placing civil penalty revenue into a dedicated environmental remediation account. The revenue generated from this legislation would be spent on orphan well remediation as well as attendant oil and gas pipelines and facilities for which no responsible operator can be identified.

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