



CalGEM Permitting & Compliance FAQ

Key Information for California Tribes in Understanding the Oil & Gas Permitting Process

1. What is CalGEM?

- a. The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) is the state's lead agency for regulating oil, natural gas, and geothermal energy operations. Its mission is to protect public health, safety, and the environment while ensuring responsible energy resource development through science-based oversight.
- b. CalGEM operates through three regional districts that provide localized oversight and support:

- Northern District
- Inland District
- Southern District

Each district has offices that serve as local points of contact for the public and energy operators. CalGEM district operations include:

- Field inspections and regulatory compliance
- Underground Injection Control project review and approvals
- Aquifer exemption technical evaluations
- Well permitting
- Construction site well reviews
- Oversight of pipelines and facilities

2. Is a permit needed to plug a well?

- a. Yes. An OG106 must be filed with wellbore schematics and approved before plugging or re-abandonment of wells. Since 2019, CalGEM has issued more permits for plugging than for new drilling.

3. What activities require a CalGEM permit?

- a. Any drilling, reworking, plugging, and abandoning of oil, gas, or geothermal wells on tribal, public, private lands, or within 3 nautical miles offshore requires CalGEM authorization.

4. What's required to drill a new oil or gas well?

Operators must:

- Secure approval from **local authorities** first
- Designate a CA-based agent ([OG150](#))
- Complete a Contact Questionnaire ([OGD7](#))

- Submit a Notice of Intention ([OG106](#))
- Comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (attach local Notice of Determination/Exemption)
- Submit a bond ([OG160](#))
- Receive CalGEM's Permit to Drill before starting

5. How does the permit review process work?

a. All permit applications go through:

- Initial completeness check by CalGEM District staff
- CEQA environmental assessment
- In-depth technical review for safety, compliance, and engineering soundness

6. Where are forms submitted?

- a. To the [CalGEM district office](#) responsible for the well's location. Include technical contacts in all submissions.

7. Does the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) apply to tribal land operations?

- a. Yes. Operators must include CEQA documentation in their permit request, including on tribal lands.

8. How does tribal consultation work?

- a. Tribal consultation ensures the California tribes – especially those with cultural and historical ties to a proposed project site – have a meaningful opportunity to engage with the State before permits are issued. CalGEM is required by state law and policy – AB 52 and Executive Order B-10-11 – to engage in government-to-government consultation with tribes before issuing certain permits, especially those that may impact tribal cultural resources.
- b. Tribal consultation is initiated, when CalGEM receives an application for activities such as (drilling new wells, reworking wells, plugging wells) and if the project may affect tribal cultural resources.

c. CalGEM's tribal consultation process includes:

- Tribal Notification: CalGEM notifies tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliate with the proposed project area. Notification is sent based on the Native American Heritage Commision's tribal contact list.
- Request for Consultation: Depending on the project and notification details, tribes have 60-90 days from receiving the notice to request consultation.
- Tribal Consultation: If consultation is requested by a tribe(s), DOC/CalGEM initiates tribal consultation with the tribe(s).
- Post-Consultation & CalGEM Decision: CalGEM will consider tribal input before making a final permit decision.

9. What if drilling doesn't start within 24 months?

- a. The permit is canceled. Extensions may be possible if requested in response to a CalGEM Well Status Inquiry before expiration.

10. What role can tribes play in the permitting process?

- a. Through tribal consultation, tribes can assert cultural and historical ties and identify sacred sites that may be affected; shape project conditions; and build partnerships with CalGEM to ensure tribal input in CalGEM planning.
- b. Tribal consultation in CalGEM permitting process is an opportunity for tribes to protect cultural resources, assert tribal sovereignty, and influence land use decisions on their ancestral lands.

11. Are geothermal wells treated differently?

- a. Yes. Geothermal permits include distinct bonding and drilling fee structures. Blanket bonds and individual insurance options are accepted. [More info here.](#)

12. What qualifies as "rework"?

- a. Any post-drilling operation that deepens, redrills, or alters the well casing or function. This also includes repair and maintenance that affects well integrity. Requires a new OG106 and CalGEM approval.

13. Is a permit needed to plug a well?

- a. Yes. An OG106 must be filed with wellbore schematics and approved before plugging or re-abandonment. Since 2019, CalGEM has issued more permits for plugging than for new drilling.

14. Where are forms submitted?

- a. To the [CalGEM district office](#) responsible for the well's location. Include technical contacts in all submissions.

15. Where can I learn more or contact my district office?

- a. You can find more information and district contact details on the CalGEM website:
https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Pages/calgem_contacts.aspx

For more information or to connect with the DOC Tribal Liaison, please reach out to Crystal Blue at Crystal.Blue@conservation.ca.gov or TribalAffairs@conservation.ca.gov

Sources:

- https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/for_operators
- https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/geothermal/Pages/new_operator_info.aspx
- <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Pages/permits.aspx>

- AB 52, Executive Order B-10-11, SB 18, CNRA tribal consultation: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfindmkaj/https://lci.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/20200224-AB_52_Technical_Advisory_Feb_2020.pdf