

7. Well Activity: Overview

The wells activity section of this manual provides operating guidelines for regulatory requirements throughout the operations life cycle of the permitted activity. Permit holders must complete a Notice of Construction Start as detailed in Chapter 4 of this manual. Prior to beginning construction, submit a Notice of Construction Start via [eSubmission](#). Notices must be submitted prior to commencement of land clearing and/or the set-up of equipment on location and at least 48 hours before construction is to begin. Associated oil and gas activities, if required in addition to the oil and gas activity permit, are touched on in Section 3.1 of this manual.

Please Note:

This manual is written as a whole and provided to industry in sections to allow permit holders to access activity chapters. It is prudent of the permit holder to review the manual in its entirety and be aware of the content in other sections of the manual

7.1 Wells Permitted Activities

All permit holders are ultimately responsible for ensuring they understand and meet all legal and regulatory requirements of the permit, including all conditions attached to the permit. If an exemption is requested from regulatory requirements, an exemption must be prepared at the time of application. Permit holders must contact the Commission prior to commencing construction or operations if the adherence to the permitted activity cannot be met. The Commission may be able to provide further guidance and clarification.

Section 4 of the [Drilling and Production Regulation](#) (DPR) provides a list of sections to which an exemption may be granted. Requests for an exemption or variance after the permit is issued should be submitted for approval to the Commission's Drilling and Production department.

7.1.1 Wells Defined

Wells are an oil and gas activity as defined in OGAA, and are specifically defined in the [Petroleum and Natural Gas Act](#) as:

A hole in the ground:

- a) Made or being made by drilling, boring or any other method to obtain petroleum or natural gas.
- b) Made or being made by drilling, boring or any other method to explore for, develop or use a storage reservoir for the storage or disposal of petroleum, natural gas, water produced in relation to the production of petroleum or natural gas, waste or any other prescribed substance.
- c) Used, drilled or being drilled to inject natural gas, water produced in relation to the production of petroleum or natural gas or other substances into an underground formation in connection with the production of petroleum or natural gas.
- d) Used to dispose of petroleum, natural gas, water produced in relation to the production of petroleum or natural gas, waste or any other prescribed substance into a storage reservoir, or
- e) Used, drilled or being drilled to obtain geological or geophysical information respecting petroleum or natural gas.

And includes a water source well.

7.1.2 Regulatory Requirements

Well activities must meet the design and operational requirements outlined in the [Oil and Gas Activities Act](#) (OGAA), [Drilling and Production Regulation](#) (DPR), the [Environmental Protection and Management Regulation](#) (EPMR).

Additional legislation, regulations and/or standards permit holders should adhere to include:

- [Contaminated Sites Regulation](#) (CSR)
- [Oil and Gas Waste Regulation](#) (OGWR).
- [Hazardous Wastes Regulation](#) (HWR).

- [Spill Reporting Regulation](#) (SRR).
- [Inline Testing Directive](#).
- [Well Data Submission Requirements Manual](#)

7.1.3 Guidance Requirements

Well activities should meet guidance recommendations in the following Commission documents:

- [Management of Saline Fluid for Hydraulic Fracturing Guideline](#)
- [British Columbia Noise Control Best Practices Guideline](#)
- [Flaring and Venting Reduction Guideline](#)

7.2 Well Permit Amendments

A well permit amendment is required for changes to approved well permits as outlined in the following scenarios. Approval of a permit amendment is required before the associated changes are carried out. Amendment scenarios include:

- Surface footprint (surface disturbance) is changed.
- Objective formation(s) or the formation at total depth has changed.
- Expected hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) release rate is changed, resulting in a change of the emergency planning zone.
- Change blowout prevention from the class in the well permit to a lower class.
- Change in surface wellhead coordinates results in change in the well name (example: the pad is located in a boundary and the change causes the well name to change from 1-3 to 3-3).
- Change in BHL with attendant changes in well profile such that the well name adds or deletes "HZ"

Well permit amendments must receive permission for flaring which is not included in the original permit, nor found in Section 42 of the [Drilling and Production Regulation](#).

Permit amendments are not required:

- For minor changes if the proposed final total depth (FTD) resulting from geological prognosis change, simple changes to hole size or casing size, addition of a core or a drillstem test (DST) or minor changes in well centre coordinates.
- When changing well head location if there is no change to wellsite location or to well head surface location (NTS or DLS coordinates). For example, a permit amendment is not required when moving the well head within the well site area, but new coordinates must be reported on the Summary Report of Drilling Operations (SRDO). See section 8.2.1 of this manual for further information on the SRDO.

A well permit amendment is submitted through the Commission's Application Management System. Refer to the [Oil and Gas Activity Application Manual](#) for specific details. Minor changes in surface wellsite co-ordinates are collected in the [eSubmission portal](#) using the Summary Report of Drilling Operations.

7.2.1 Well Re-entries

A drilling re-entry is defined as additional drilling on a well that had previously been drilled and rig released. A well permit amendment is required to re-enter a well that has not been issued a Certificate of Restoration (CoR). A new well permit is required to re-enter a well issued a CoR. Refer to the [Oil and Gas Activity Application Manual](#) for the permit application and amendment processes.

7.2.2 Junked or Lost Hole Policy

When a problem is encountered in drilling a well, the drilling rig can be skidded and a new well spudded under the same well permit providing:

- The surface casing has not been set and data (for example, sample) has not been collected.

The skidding of the rig and drilling of the new hole may proceed without delay, but the well operator must submit an amendment and attach copies of the new survey plan.

If surface casing has been set on a drilling well and the hole below the shoe is junked or lost due to drilling problems, a new well permit is required to skid the rig and drill a new hole. In these situations the permit processing may be expedited by the Commission provided no changes to the existing location are required.

7.3 Well Data and Well Data Submission

Drilling activities must be reported to the Commission in accordance with Section 8 of the [Drilling and Production Regulation](#) and any well permit conditions. Any questions or problems should be directed to the Drilling and Production Department, Engineering Operations Technician.

Well Reports and Well Data are defined in Section 14 of Oil and Gas Activities Act General Regulation as information obtained from or about a well, including drill cuttings, core samples and several specific types of data, reports, surveys and information. The [Drilling and Production Regulation](#) provides submission requirements for well reports and well data. Further guidance on submission processes and requirements is available in the Commission's [Well Data Submission Requirements Manual](#).

The Commission holds and releases confidential well reports and well data as per Section 17 of the Oil and Gas Activities Act General Regulation.

Special Data Well Designation

The special data well designation was introduced to recognize operators for obtaining specified, high value well data by providing extended confidentiality to a period of 18 months from rig release date. Refer to the Commission's [Summary Information: Special Data Wells](#) document for further information on application requirements, processes and considerations.

Discovery Well Designation

A discovery well is a well from which, in the opinion of a designated Commission official, sufficient information has been obtained to determine that the well has encountered a previously undiscovered pool. Wells designated as Discovery Wells are classified as exploratory wildcat under Section 2(3) of the [Drilling and Production Regulation](#), extending the confidentiality period to the duration specified in Section 17(1) of OGAA. Refer to the

Commission's [Summary Information: Discovery Wells](#) document for further information on application requirements, processes and considerations.

Concurrent Operations Plan

A concurrent operations plan must be on site when conducting operations on any well that is less than 25 metres from another well and made available upon request of the Commission.

If the well-to-well spacing is less than 25 metres and the applicant has a Multi-well Pad Concurrent Operations Plan in place, then Commission requirements will have been satisfied and the application can then be deemed “routine”.

If a Multi-well Pad Concurrent Operations Plan is not in place, the application is deemed “non-routine” and rationale regarding the proposed safe operating procedures for the life of the well must be indicated on the application.

The Commission further notes that the Multi-well Pad Concurrent Operations Plan is an overview applied to each site in accordance with specific characteristics. It is essential to have specific processes in place addressing operational safety, fire risks and emergency coordination and may consist of, but is not limited to:

- Specify the minimum wellhead separation distance being used.
- Address regulatory requirements related to operational spacing, fire control requirements and risk assessments.
- Procedures for safe well drilling and service operating, including emergency procedures.
- Drilling or workover operations: consideration of adjacent wellbores for such things as injection pressures, collision avoidance.
- Communication and coordination with other operators if well(s) owned by different companies.
- Chain of command and responsibilities for the site addressed in specific processes.
- Physical and fire safety protection of in-place wellheads, facilities, etc. when working on adjacent well(s).

7.4 Emergency Management Program Requirements

7.4.1 Emergency Management Program and Response Plans

The Oil and Gas Activities Act requires permit holders to prepare and maintain an emergency management program and a response contingency plan (ERP) as prescribed in the [Emergency Management Regulation](#) (EMR). The requirements and processes described in the EMR and the Commission's [Emergency Management Manual](#) are designed to create a framework for the protection of the public, property and the environment from emergencies arising out of oil and gas activities.

Adequate emergency response procedures and plans must be in place for all wells before well construction, conducting well service operations and/or spudding well.

Response plans should include incident reporting requirements in accordance with the [Spill Reporting Regulation](#) and the [Commission's Incident Reporting Instructions and Guidelines](#) document.

7.4.2 Notification for Residents in EPZ

Provide notification to residents within hazard planning zone for all wells prior spudding and at rig release.

7.4.3 Emergency Response Planning Meetings

Provide notice to the Commission of emergency response planning meetings within two business days prior to drilling into first oil or gas formation. Notification is made via email to EMP@bcogc.ca.