

20 AAC 25.072(d) is amended to read:

(d) If well operations are not resumed within 12 months, the operator shall immediately proceed to abandon or suspend the well. **Wells drilled from a mobile offshore drilling unit that are not located on a fixed offshore platform are not eligible for suspension.** Upon application of the operator, the commission will extend the 12-month period, if the operator shows that operational circumstances beyond the operator's control prevent resumption within the 12-month period.

(Eff. 4/2/86, Register 97; am 11/7/99, Register 152; am 7/28/2022, Register 243)

Authority: AS 31.05.030

20 AAC 25.105(c)(2) is amended to read:

(2) subsea equipment for well re-entry is properly installed and [EITHER THE WELL IS SUSPENDED OR] well operations are shut down in accordance with 20 AAC 25.072.

(Eff. 4/13/80, Register 74; am 4/2/86, Register 97; am 11/7/99, Register 152; am 7/28/2022, Register 243)

Authority: AS 31.05.030

20 AAC 25.110 is amended to read:

(a) If allowed under 20 AAC 25.105, an operator may apply to the commission under this section to approve the suspension of a well or to renew the approval of the suspension of a well.

The operator must

(1) state the reasons the well should be suspended, and why the well should not be completed or abandoned;

(2) demonstrate to the commission's satisfaction that

(A) the well

(i) is mechanically sound;

(ii) will not allow the migration of fluids;

(iii) will not damage freshwater or producing or potentially producing formations;

(iv) will not impair the recovery of oil or gas;

(v) is secure, safe, and not a threat to public health;

(vi) is located on a valid lease that authorizes the operator to drill for oil, gas, coal

bed methane, gas hydrates, or shale gas, or to evaluate underground coal gasification or geothermal resources; and

(vii) is in compliance with all provisions of AS 31.05, this chapter, and any order, stipulation, or permit issued by the commission; and

(B) the well

(i) has future utility as an exploratory, development, or service well;

(ii) is a viable candidate for redrilling; or

(iii) **in the case of initial suspensions only**, is located on a pad or platform with active producing or service wells; and

(3) for a well that does not lie within a unitized area **with active production**,

(A) provide the commission with a list of the leases that the wellbore traverses, from surface location to bottom-hole location, and the expiration date of each lease; and

(B) notify the commission not later than 30 days after the change, if the status of any lease changes.

(b) An Application for Sundry Approvals (Form 10-403) must be approved by the commission before operations to suspend a well commence **or for a well suspension renewal**, except that oral approval may be requested under 20 AAC 25.507(b). In addition to meeting the requirements of (a) of this section, the application must include the following:

(1) wellbore diagrams illustrating the current and proposed mechanical configurations of the well;

(2) information on abnormally geo-pressured or depleted strata;

(3) a description of the proposed work plan, including how the integrity of existing and proposed plugs will be demonstrated;

(4) evidence or a statement that confirms that a well inspection was conducted within 12 months before the suspension renewal date, if the operator is applying for a well suspension renewal;

(5) a list of the leases that the wellbore traverses, from surface location to bottom-hole location, and the expiration date of each lease.

(c) Unless the commission otherwise requires or approves a variance under 20 AAC 25.112(i), any well suspended under this section must be plugged in accordance with 20 AAC 25.112, except that the requirements of 20 AAC 25.112(d) do not apply if

(1) a wellhead **and tree are** [IS] installed [OR THE WELL IS CAPPED WITH A MECHANICAL DEVICE TO SEAL THE OPENING]; **or** [AND]

(2) **the well is capped with a mechanical device to seal the opening and** a bridge plug capped with 50 feet of cement or a continuous cement plug extending 200 feet within the interior casing string is placed at or above 300 feet below the surface.

(d) The operator of a suspended well shall maintain the integrity and safety of the well and surrounding location [AND CLEAR THE LOCATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH 20 AAC 25.170(A) (2) OR (B) OR WITH 20 AAC 25.172(C) (2) OR (D), AS APPLICABLE].

(e) [FOR A WELL SUSPENDED BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2009, THE OPERATOR SHALL INSPECT THE WELL SITE BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30, 2010. FOR A WELL INITIALLY SUSPENDED ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009, THE OPERATOR SHALL INSPECT THE WELL SITE WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF SUSPENSION. FOR A WELL SUSPENDED UNDER THIS SECTION, SUBSEQUENT INSPECTIONS SHALL BE CONDUCTED WITHIN 24 MONTHS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30 OF EVERY CALENDAR YEAR ENDING IN 0 OR 5, EXCEPT THAT A SUSPENDED WELL IS NOT REQUIRED TO UNDERGO A SUBSEQUENT INSPECTION UNDER THIS SUBSECTION IF THE INITIAL INSPECTION UNDER THIS SUBSECTION OCCURRED WITHIN THE PRIOR 24-MONTH PERIOD]. **A well-site inspection is required within 12 months after the approval of an initial well suspension. A subsequent inspection shall be conducted within 12 months before the suspension renewal date, as approved by the commission.** For all inspections under this section, the operator shall provide the commission notice at least 10 days before the inspection and the opportunity for commission inspectors to accompany the operator on the inspection tour. If convenient for the commission, shorter notice periods may be accepted.

(f) [WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER ANY WELL-SITE INSPECTION REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION] **A Report of Sundry Well Operations (Form 10-404) is required not later than 30 days after any well-site inspection required under this section** [, INCLUDING (E), (H), AND (I) OF THIS SECTION, THE OPERATOR SHALL FILE A REPORT OF SUNDRY WELL OPERATIONS (FORM 10-404)]. The report must include

(1) a description of the condition of the wellhead and surface location, including any discoloration, fluid or sheen visible on the ground or in any nearby water;

(2) a plat showing the location of the suspended well and any wells within a one-quarter-mile radius of the wellbore;

(3) well pressure readings[, IF PRACTICABLE];

(4) photographs clearly showing the condition of the wellhead and surrounding location;
and

(5) an update of all information and documentation required in (b) of this section.

(g) A suspension or renewal of a suspension [APPROVED ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009 IS VALID FOR 10 YEARS FROM THE DATE OF APPROVAL] **approval is valid for up to five years from the date of the suspension or renewal of a suspension approval.**

(h) Renewal of an existing suspension may be requested by the submission of an Application for Sundry Approvals (Form 10-403) meeting all requirements of (b) of this section. A renewal is not effective until approved by the commission. If a complete renewal application is submitted at least 60 days before the expiration of an existing suspension, the existing suspension continues until the commission acts on the application. [WITHIN 24 MONTHS BEFORE THE SUBMISSION OF A REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION RENEWAL, A WELL-SITE INSPECTION MUST BE COMPLETED.] If the well does not lie within a unitized area **with active production**, the application to renew an existing suspension must include a list of all leases that the wellbore traverses, from surface location to bottom-hole location, and the expiration date of each lease.

[i] FOR WELLS SUSPENDED BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2009, AN APPLICATION FOR SUNDRY APPROVALS (FORM 10-403) REQUESTING A SUSPENSION RENEWAL UNDER (H) OF THIS SECTION MUST BE SUBMITTED

(1) NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2010 FOR ALL WELLS SUSPENDED BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2006; AND

(2) NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2015 FOR ALL WELLS SUSPENDED ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2006.]

(i) [(j)] The operator shall immediately notify the commission and propose appropriate action if the operator learns that there is a reasonable risk that a suspended well is

- (1) mechanically unsound;
- (2) allowing the migration of fluids;
- (3) causing damage to freshwater or producing or potentially producing formations;
- (4) impairing the recovery of oil or gas;
- (5) a threat to public health or not secure or safe; or
- (6) not in compliance with all provisions of AS 31.05, this chapter, and any order,

stipulation, or permit issued by the commission.

(j) [(k)] **not later than** five working days after notifying the commission under (i) [(j)] of this section, the operator shall file a report and all relevant information and documentation regarding the well, including all information and documentation that may be required by the commission.

(k) [(l)] If the operator learns that any information required under this section is no longer complete or accurate, the operator shall, within 30 days, notify the commission in writing, provide updated information, and propose appropriate action.

(l) [(m)] At any time, the commission may request that an operator provide, **not later than** 10 days after the date of request, any information concerning whether suspension remains appropriate for a well. If the operator does not comply with the information request or if the commission determines that information is insufficient to support allowing the well to remain suspended, the commission may take action under 20 AAC 25.540, including

(1) revoking the well's suspended status, effective as of the date determined by the commission;

(2) prescribing actions the operator must take, which may include plugging and abandonment of the well; if action is ordered, including plugging and abandonment under this chapter, a separate notice and hearing is not required notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, including 20 AAC 25.105.

(m) [(n)] Upon written request of the operator, the commission may modify a deadline in this section upon a showing of good cause, approve a variance from any other requirement of this section if the variance provides at least an equally effective means of complying with the requirement, or approve a waiver of a requirement of this section if the waiver will not promote waste, is based on sound engineering and geoscience principles, will not jeopardize the ultimate recovery of hydrocarbons, will not jeopardize correlative rights, and will not result in an increased risk to health, safety, or the environment, including freshwater.

(Eff. 4/2/86, Register 97; am 11/7/99, Register 152; am 11/19/2008, Register 188; am 4/15/2010, Register 194; am 2/10/2018, Register 225; am 7/28/2022, Register 243)

Authority: AS 31.05.030 AS 31.05.040 AS 31.05.095

20 AAC 25.534 is amended to add a new subsection to read:

(c) For locations that are remote from the nearest commission office, the operator is responsible for transporting the commission inspector to and from the locations. In this section, unless the context requires otherwise, "remote" means the location cannot be accessed by a commission vehicle. (Eff. 4/2/86, Register 97; am 11/7/99, Register 152; am 7/28/2022, Register 243)

Authority: AS 31.05.030 AS 31.05.095

20 AAC 25.990 is amended to read:

(64) "stabilizing pressure" means the pressure decline during the test shall trend toward a zero pressure differential:

[(64)] **(65)** "standard cubic foot" has the meaning given to "cubic foot" in AS 31.05.170;

[(65)] **(66)** "stb" means stock tank barrel;

[(66)] **(67)** "stock tank barrel" means 42 U.S. gallons, measured at 60°F and 14.65 psia;

[(67)] **(68)** "stratigraphic test well" means a hole drilled for the sole purpose of gaining structural or stratigraphic information to aid in exploring for oil and gas;

[(68)] **(69)** "structural casing" means a short string of large diameter pipe that is set by driving, jetting, or drilling to support unconsolidated shallow sediments, provide hole stability for initial drilling operations, and provide anchorage for a diverter system;

[(69)] **(70)** "surface casing" means a string of casing set and cemented in a well to prevent lost circulation while drilling deeper and to protect strata known or reasonably expected to serve as a source of drinking water for human consumption; usually "surface casing" is the first string of casing upon which BOPE is set;

[(70)] **(71)** "suspend" means to plug a well in accordance with 20 AAC 25.110 and to reserve the option later to re-enter and

(A) redrill the well; or

(B) complete the well as an oil, gas, or service well;

[(71)] **(72)** "tour" means a work shift in the drilling of a well;

[(72)] **(73)** "underbalanced drilling" means drilling under conditions where the hydrostatic head of the drilling fluid column is intentionally designed to be lower than the pressure of the formation being drilled;

[(73)] **(74)** "well"

(A) means a hole penetrating the earth, usually cased with steel pipe, and

(i) from which oil or gas, or both, or geothermal resources, is obtained or obtainable;

or

(ii) that is made for the purpose of finding or obtaining oil, gas, or geothermal resources, or of supporting oil, gas, or geothermal resources production; and

(B) includes a well with multiple well branches drilled to different bottom-hole locations;

[(74)] **(75)** "well branch" means that portion of a well drilled below the structural or conductor casing to access a given objective in a well with more than one bottom-hole location or whose bottom-hole location is being or has been changed by plugging back and redrilling; a well with multiple branches must feed into a designated primary wellbore;

[(75)] **(76)** "working day" means a calendar day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a state holiday;

[(76)] **(77)** "primary wellbore" means the active wellbore that is drilled from surface to the reservoir target, in which additional permitted branches are drilled; in the case of a sidetracked well, the new wellbore becomes the primary wellbore.

[(77)] **(78)** "surface owner" means a person who holds record title to the surface of the land as an owner.

(Eff. 11/7/99, Register 152; am 1/5/2006, Register 177; am 9/30/2010, Register 195; am 11/3/2013, Register 208; am 1/7/2015, Register 213; am ___/___/___, Register ___)

Authority: AS 31.05.030

AS 41.06.005

AS 41.06.035

AS 41.06.040