

Bulletin 2021-14

April 9, 2021

Changes To Well Spacing Requirements

Well spacing refers to the number of wells in a given surface area. Historically, well spacing was prescribed based on production type and area to ensure that resource conservation was maximized. Those prescriptions were developed in the context of vertical wells targeting conventional pools. As development has moved more and more to horizontal wells, these prescriptions have become less and less applicable. Because of how horizontal wells can target distant pools, having more wells on a single pad can greatly reduce the amount of surface disturbance. Applications for special well spacing have become routine.

On March 26, the Government of Alberta updated the [Oil and Gas Conservation Rules \(OGCR\)](#). Section 4.021(1) has been modified to remove well spacing prescriptions from the rules. Instead of prescribing standard well spacing based on production type and area, the *OGCR* now provides us with the general authority to limit, by order, the number of wells that may be produced in a drilling spacing unit. This change will support a more fit-for-purpose application of well spacing across Alberta's oil and gas formations.

These changes do not alter any of our existing technical, environmental, or public safety regulations that govern surface energy development activity. Additionally, all existing participant involvement requirements for well license applications under [Directive 056: Energy Development Applications and Schedules](#) and the specified enactments remain in place. Any person who believes they may be directly and adversely affected by a project's proposed wells and associated facilities may file statements of concern on these applications.

In response to these changes, we have amended [Order Nos. OSA 1, 2, and 3](#) to retain the previously prescribed well spacing for the oil sands areas and formations. We've also revised Unit 7 of [Directive 065: Resources Applications for Oil and Gas Reservoirs](#) to align our requirements and processes with these *OGCR* changes.

Special well spacing and holdings previously approved under *Directive 065* will remain in effect until operators apply to rescind them. *Directive 065* applications to modify buffer zones also remain in effect.

inquiries 1-855-297-8311
24-hour
emergency 1-800-222-6514

The updated *OGCR, Directive 065*, and OSA orders are available on the AER website, www.aer.ca. If you have any questions, contact the Customer Contact Centre by phone at 1-855-297-8311 or email at inquiries@er.ca.