



## **Informational Letter IL 80-23**

TO: ALL OPERATORS OF OIL, GAS, OIL SANDS AND PIPELINES

### **EXPERIMENTAL SCHEMES**

- **RELEASE OF APPLICATIONS AND BASIC WELL AND GEOLOGICAL RECORDS**
- **CONFIDENTIALITY PROVISION FOR UNIQUE DESIGN DATA AND PROGRESS REPORTS ON OPERATING RESULTS**
- **REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION OF LOCAL INTEREST**

This letter outlines revised procedures for control of information respecting experimental schemes.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The general policy for classifying experimental schemes for the recovery of bitumen and crude oil is set out in Informational Letter IL-OG 78-12. Experimental data submitted to the Board pursuant to the approval of an experimental scheme is retained by the Board on a confidential basis pursuant to the provisions of section 12.150(8) of the regulations. The Board has determined that as the number and variety of field experimental operations has grown rather rapidly in recent years, that it is proper that the basic intent and nature of such schemes should be made available to the public and that certain basic information such as geological data should be removed from the experimental information category and placed in the Board's normal records system. Occasionally, the Board also receives requests from local residents regarding environment protection measures or other local concerns and the Board believes that procedures must be available to readily reply to such requests while at the same time avoiding disclosure of proprietary information. This letter sets out the procedures that will be used to meet those purposes.

### **APPLICATIONS**

In keeping with the procedure in use during the past year, applications for experimental schemes will be made available to the public in a manner similar to other applications received by the Board. The time of release will be either upon approval of the scheme by the Board (the most common situation), or upon publication of notice for objection or hearing.

Requirements for experimental scheme applications include descriptions of the general program of investigations, site development plans (including well locations, equipment sites, mine pits, etc.), surface facilities layout and design capacities, geological information, environmental factors and protection measures and identification of any landowners or leaseholders that may be affected.

Experimental schemes sometimes involve intricate new design considerations or operating techniques which when implemented may lead to the development of information of special proprietary value. This kind of information, though relevant to the Board for examining technical merit of the

experimental test program, would not ordinarily be considered of general public interest and need not be part of the application. It should, however, be submitted as confidential information to be made part of the progress report documentation. That information would then be given the same confidential status as that of the progress reports as described on a following page.

Where the size and duration of experimental operation is such as to be of significant importance to the local region, information concerning socioeconomic matters may be required. For clarification of the need for this and other information, it is suggested that a draft of the application be discussed with the Board staff by contacting the Oil Sands Department prior to formal submittal.

### **STANDARD LOG AND CORE DATA**

During the course of the discussions over the past year, agreement was reached on the benefits of converting the basic well files for oil sands evaluation (OV) and experimental (EX) wells to the same filing and release system applicable for conventional oil and gas wells in the province. By converting to this procedure, routine well information including basic well licensing data, drilling depth information and conventional well logs and core data will be administered in the same way as that which is in use for conventional wells. Amendments to regulations 12.150(2)(c), (4) and (6) will be made to reflect these revised procedures.

### **SPECIAL LOG AND CORE DATA AND OTHER MEASUREMENTS**

Recognizing that during the operation of an experimental scheme special monitoring, including log and core measurements, are often used to evaluate performance, the Board will receive and consider such information and measurements as part of the confidential progress reports. For example, log and cores taken to investigate an altered state resulting from experimental activity would fall into that category and should be submitted as part of the confidential progress report in order to retain confidential status.

### **PROGRESS REPORTS**

The basic data obtained during experimental operations is compiled and submitted to the Board in the form of progress reports. These reports are retained by the Board on a confidential basis pursuant to section 12.150(8) of the regulations. During the course of discussions a range of opinions has been expressed concerning the control of this kind of information. The variations in viewpoint appear to stem from different perceptions of what kind of information might be considered of particular competitive value.

The Board agrees that proprietary design data made available to the Board staff at the time of filing of the application should be confidential. Also, the Board concurs with the general view that information developed during experimental operations which is of special proprietary value warrants confidential treatment. On the other hand, relatively free exchange within the industry of information respecting improvements in state-of-the-art developments and operating techniques will usually accelerate the pace of such improvements and would be broadly beneficial to the industry.

To better meet the objectives and needs of research groups, industry and the public interest, the Board has adopted the suggestion that experimental scheme progress reports be scheduled for release five years after completion of an experimental operation this ordinarily being the expiry date of the approval, provided that release would not result in serious loss of proprietary information. In cases

where an experimental operation has been extended to perform an additional phase of investigation, classification of the completion dates of the experimental operations will be determined in consultation with the operator. Therefore, commencing in 1981, progress reports for experimental schemes will ordinarily be scheduled for release five years after completion of the experimental operation. A backlog of older reports submitted during the 1960s and early 1970s may be eligible for disclosure under this revised policy.

Exception to this rule may be obtained, however, if an operator requests and obtains continued confidential status for the reports for an additional period of five years by satisfying the Board that the information is still of significant proprietary value. The reports would then be re-scheduled for release at the end of the second five-year period unless the operator demonstrated to the Board's satisfaction that it was in the public interest to continue to classify the information as confidential for such further period considered appropriate.

### **INFORMATION OF LOCAL INTEREST**

Occasionally, the Board receives requests from local residents, other leaseholders and the local news media respecting the operating aspects of an approved experimental scheme. The Board has directed its staff to ensure that any such requests that are reasonable and proper should be fulfilled expeditiously. The Board expects operators of experimental schemes to co-operate fully in responding to any such requests whether those come directly to an operator or are received at a Board field office or its Head Office. In line with suggestions submitted by operators, the Board does not intend to establish any formal procedure to meet this need.

DATED at Calgary, Alberta on 16 September 1980.

*<signed by>*

**ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION BOARD**

N. Strom  
Board Member