

Public Statement

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Temporary suspension of low risk monitoring and reporting

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June 9, 2020

In response to [public health orders](#) issued by the Government of Alberta, members of Alberta's energy industry have submitted information to the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) about conflicts between these orders and AER requirements. These conflicts mean that following one set of requirements puts them in noncompliance with the other set.

The AER developed a process to resolve these conflicts while ensuring that the environment and the health and safety of Alberta communities and industry workers remain protected. The AER adopted two guiding principles as part of this process to determine the effect a temporary pause of AER requirements would have on environmental outcomes:

- A clear conflict exists between complying with the government's public health orders and complying with the AER's environmental monitoring and reporting requirements.
- A short-term exemption to environmental monitoring would only be provided if it would not seriously jeopardize our ability to protect environmental health and maintain public safety.

The AER applied these two guiding principles in a formal review process. Decisions on which monitoring projects could be paused were based on assessments by technical experts to ensure that any temporary suspensions represented a low risk to public safety and environmental outcomes. Essential environmental monitoring continues, and all requirements to monitor and report emergency events remain in place. More information on what monitoring has been temporarily suspended is available on our [website](#). These suspensions and modifications will apply for so long as ministerial orders [17/2020](#) and [219/2020](#) and the public health orders are in effect.

Overall, the temporary suspensions issued by AER represent between two and five per cent of overall monitoring requirements.

The suspensions were carefully chosen to address the conflicts in requirements while maintaining the integrity of Alberta's long-term environmental information systems. These programs collect data over decades and are able to accommodate some breaks in collection and still allow us to assess changes in the environment. The longer monitoring has been in place, the more easily we can detect changes in trends following any short-term pause of data collection. Conversely, all monitoring and reporting requirements remain in place where we lack historical data, where contamination already exists, or for protected areas like Alberta's World Heritage Sites.

These decisions enable industry to follow the public health orders without being in noncompliance with our requirements. It helps us to prevent people from working in close quarters, helps prevent people from travelling from around and outside Alberta, and reduces the risk – where possible – of spreading the virus to northern and rural Alberta communities. This

protects both the workers and the communities they are working in and traveling through, which in turn protects the health and safety of all Albertans.

In response to these changes, Alberta's Chief Scientist, Dr. Fred Wrona, says that temporary suspensions in select environmental monitoring programs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is low-risk and should not significantly compromise the integrity of Alberta's long-term environmental information systems. Dr. Wrona also noted that these are unprecedented times, and we need to continue to work with relevant government organizations, communities, and our monitoring partners to ensure we continue protecting the environment along with human health.

The Government of Alberta recently announced stage 2 of relaunch will begin on June 12. The AER will review the updated public health direction and will be assessing how to adjust the temporary suspensions to align with that direction.

The Alberta Energy Regulator ensures the safe, efficient, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of hydrocarbon resources over their entire life cycle. This includes allocating and conserving water resources, managing public lands, and protecting the environment while providing economic benefits for all Albertans.

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