Fact Sheet

Oil and Gas Wells in Ontario

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) is responsible for a variety of activities related to oil and gas wells, including policy development and analysis, licensing and approvals, enforcement, and inspection. The ministry also provides technical support to municipalities related to oil and gas well emergency planning, preparedness, and response.

Responsibility for wells falls to the licence holder, lessee, or other "operator" of that well. Where no licence holder, lessee or other operator exists, the responsibility for the well falls to the landowner.

Municipalities and first responders should be aware of petroleum resources and infrastructure in their communities and include them in their emergency management plans.

Oil and gas wells are human-dug holes in the ground that are typically designed to bring oil or natural gas to the surface.

Wells that are abandoned do not necessarily pose a safety risk. Risks associated with aging infrastructure include:

- leaking wells – show signs of soil staining and vegetation die-off.
- hydrogen sulphide – a poisonous gas that in some instances may be detected by the smell of rotten eggs.
- high pressure / flammability – natural gas and oil may be released at high pressures around wells; these fluids are flammable and combustible.

Members of the public can find information about oil and gas wells in Ontario, including location and status of wells by accessing:

- the interactive petroleum well map at the Ontario Geo Hub: https://geohub.lio.gov.on.ca/search?q=petroleum
- searchable petroleum well records at the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Library: www.ogsrlibrary.com

Landowners that are aware of, or discover a well on their property, are encouraged to contact the ministry's Petroleum Operations Section at posrecords@ontario.ca or by phone at (519) 873-4634.

If issues are identified with a well, the province will provide advice to the landowner or responsible party to help address the issues. If there is an immediate concern for public health and safety, individuals should evacuate the area and contact 911 or their local emergency services.

Abandoned Works Program

Is a program through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) that can provide financial assistance to well owners to support the plugging of oil and gas wells that are considered to be a risk to public health and safety or the natural environment and which qualify for financial support under the program. This program typically addresses degraded, old wells that may be at risk of leaking.

For more information on this program, please visit: www.ontario.ca/page/abandoned-works-program