



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

General Information About Oil and Gas Operations

- **Are oil and gas operations still active in Signal Hill?**
 - Yes, oil wells operate in the City through State and local permits. Gas operations are a byproduct of oil operations.
- **Where are oil and gas wells located in the City?**
 - There are approximately 400 oil wells throughout the City including within seven consolidated drill sites. There are no gas wells in the City.
- **What kinds of oil and gas activities are allowed within City limits?**
 - All oil activity within the City must have State permits and inspections as well as City entitlements and/or permits and inspections.
 - Types of activity include: Oil production with the regulation of any gas byproduct, water injection, potential drilling, redrilling, re-working, maintenance, storage, processing, and transport of products.

General Information About Oil and Gas Operations (continued)

- **What is the City's role in regulating oil and gas operations?**
 - It is the intent and purpose of the City's Oil and Gas Code, as stated in the Code, to mitigate the impact of oil-related activities on urban development and to preserve the public health, safety and general welfare. The City's role for this is to maintain oversight of the CalGEM regulatory procedures and permitting process for oil extraction, storage, and delivery procedures, and to regulate above ground activity to ensure safety and spill measures are adhered to, noise, odor or other nuisances are avoided or mitigated.
 - The City Oil and Gas Code regulates the surface visual aspects of drilling for production, processing, storage and transport by pipeline of petroleum and other hydrocarbon substances; timely and proper well abandonment and well site restoration, and removal of oil and gas related facilities; reclamation and remediation of host sites; and final disposition of pipelines in compliance with applicable laws and permits.

General Information About Oil and Gas Operations (continued)

- **What agencies, in addition to the City, oversee oil and gas operations? (e.g., California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM), AQMD, Regional Water Board)**
 - The following is a list of some of the State and regional agencies that have oversight, issue permits, conduct regular inspections, and regulate oil and gas operations Statewide:
 - U.S. EPA
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
 - CalGEM
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oil Spill Prevention and Response Unit
 - California Air Resources Board
 - State Water Resources Control Board
 - Department of Toxic Substances Control
 - Cal-OSHA
 - Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery
 - State Fire Marshall
 - Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - South Coast Air Quality Management District
 - Los Angeles County Fire Department

Permitting and Regulation

- **Who issues permits for oil operations in Signal Hill?**

- The State Department of Conservation, California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) has primary permitting and inspection authority over all oil and gas operations. Other State agencies also issue permits, including the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) and those listed below:
 - U.S. EPA
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
 - CalGEM
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oil Spill Prevention and Response Unit
 - California Air Resources Board
 - State Water Resources Control Board
 - Department of Toxic Substances Control
 - Cal-OSHA
 - Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery
 - State Fire Marshall
 - Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - Los Angeles County Fire Department

The City issues permits only after CalGEM, or other agencies, have issued permits for operations as required by the City Oil and Gas Code of the City of Signal Hill Municipal Code.

Permitting and Regulation (continued)

- **What permits are required for drilling a new oil well?**
 - The State (CalGEM) must first issue permits to allow for drilling of new wells. Once the State has approved the drilling of new wells, the City may also issue permits to allow local oversight of the surface conditions during drilling activity and the above-ground conditions during and after.
 - The City does not have jurisdiction over any “down hole” operations which are exclusively within the realm of CalGEM.

- **How does the City coordinate with State agencies on oil and gas permitting and enforcement?**
 - The City works in conjunction with the agencies. The City defers to the primary authority of CalGEM and requests copies of permits issued and any violation reports from the oil operator annually. In addition to the City’s local authority on surface land use and above-ground activity related to oil and gas operations, the City provides complimentary oversight locally with these agencies to ensure permitting and licensing with these agencies when requesting a City permit for activities.

Testing, Inspections, and Safety

- **What types of testing are conducted to ensure oil and gas operations are safe? (e.g., pressure tests, leak detection)**

- In addition to the monitoring noted above by multiple State and regional agencies for active operations, the City's Oil and Gas Code monitors development on properties with abandoned oil wells. Development standards referenced in Chapter 16.24 of the Signal Hill Municipal Code require documents and data to be prepared and submitted as prerequisites to approval of development under a public process called Site Plan and Design Review. A Well Abandonment Report is required which will contain well discovery and NAD 83 survey documents, a leak testing report and a well access exhibit. Because methane has many sources besides oil operations, a Site Methane Assessment Report and Mitigation Plan is required for ALL projects citywide whether there are known abandoned wells on site or not, prior to issuance of building permits. Most importantly, an Equivalency Standard Assessment Report is required for all abandoned wells where development is proposed over or in "close proximity" to a well. The City's methane assessment and petroleum engineer consultants, the Oil Services Coordinator, and Community Development staff will have oversight and review of the procedures and required documentation.

The City Project Development Guide can be found on the City web site at <https://www.cityofsignalhill.org/DocumentCenter/View/2829/Project-Development-Guide?bidId=> and provides the detailed methods for testing and development.

- **How are oil wells inspected to ensure public safety?**

- The State (CalGEM) reviews all below and above-ground oil operations, issues permit for related activities, monitors work in the field routinely and during permitted operations as they occur, and closes permits once work is completed.
- The City may also issue permits once the State has done so and the City Oil Services Coordinator and the City's specialized consultants monitor and observe activities and equipment. Once the State approval of completed work has been documented, the City may approve as well.

Testing, Inspections, and Safety (continued)

- **How often are oil wells and equipment inspected?**
 - The City, CalGEM, and the other agencies routinely inspect and monitor oil operations within the City limits.
 - Depending on the type of activity, the State and regional agencies, in coordination with the local operator, inspect and monitor minute-to-minute with highly specialized on-site equipment, daily, and on a regular, and annual basis through site inspections, operations, permits and licensing.

- **Who is responsible for testing and inspecting oil and gas operations — the City, State, or operators?**
 - Both the oil operator and the State and regional agencies are responsible for testing, monitoring and inspecting oil and gas operations. The City provides oversight for other surface activities and the collection of documents as identified in the City Oil and Gas Code.

Testing, Inspections, and Safety (continued)

- **What agencies, in addition to the City, oversee oil and gas operations? (e.g., California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM), AQMD, Regional Water Board)**
 - The following is a list of some of the State and regional agencies that have oversight, issue permits, conduct regular inspections, and regulate oil and gas operations Statewide:
 - U.S. EPA
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
 - CalGEM
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oil Spill Prevention and Response Unit
 - California Air Resources Board
 - State Water Resources Control Board
 - Department of Toxic Substances Control
 - Cal-OSHA
 - Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery
 - State Fire Marshall
 - Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - South Coast Air Quality Management District
 - Los Angeles County Fire Department
- **What happens if an oil well fails an inspection or a safety test?**
 - The State (CalGEM) has the authority to require a well be accessed, tested, abandoned, or re-abandoned, or even shut down for safety reasons. Fines, citations, and correction notices may be issued to remediate the concerns. The City may also issue subsequent correction notices and citations if necessary.

Testing, Inspections, and Safety (continued)

▪ How are abandoned or inactive wells monitored to prevent safety risks?

- CalGEM has primary oversight of these operations within the City. Chapter 16 of the Oil and Gas Code and Section 16.24 provide secondary surface inspections for visual impact concerns.
- Inactive or idle wells are monitored by the operator, in conjunction with the State (CalGEM), AQMD, and other State and regional agencies as noted above.

• Which agency regulates the safety and construction of oil wells?

- The State (CalGEM) has primary authority over the construction and safety of all oil wells; however operational safety is regulated by multiple State and regional agencies (listed below). In addition, the City's Oil and Gas Code has local authority over some surface conditions but defers to State regulations in all matters associated with oil operation.
 - U.S. EPA
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
 - CalGEM
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oil Spill Prevention and Response Unit
 - California Air Resources Board
 - State Water Resources Control Board
 - Department of Toxic Substances Control
 - Cal-OSHA
 - Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery
 - State Fire Marshall
 - Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - South Coast Air Quality Management District
 - Los Angeles County Fire Department

Environmental Protection and Public Health

- **How are residents protected from potential exposure to harmful gases or chemicals?**
 - The State (CalGEM), LA County Fire, the LA Sanitation District, and the Air Quality Management District (AQMD) all routinely monitor and measure atmospheric and surface conditions in and around the oil field, regionally, and Statewide.
 - The City uses the reports of such agencies to monitor the oil field. The City also uses the environmental review procedures required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to measure and monitor air quality, soils gasses, water protection, etc., on development projects, and to develop Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Programs for qualifying development projects, include remediation of wells, sub-slab methane and other soil volatile organic compounds (VOCs) prior to and as part of development.
 - Pre-development site clean-up requirements are one key method the City uses to reduce oil operations impacts. The routine inspections conducted by the City also ensure maintenance issues are dealt with by the operator in conjunction with CalGEM oversight.

- **What is done to prevent oil spills or gas leaks?**
 - The oil operators have primary duties to maintain equipment to prevent such concerns. This is inspected by CalGEM and other State agencies to ensure compliance. In addition, the City Oil and Gas Code Section 16.20, Operating and Safety Standards, regulates the surface elements such as the well head, well servicing, cellars and sumps and related equipment to ensure continued maintenance. Section 16.25, Storage Facilities, further regulates visual operations of tanks and maintenance of spill prevention equipment at these sites.
 - The oil operator is obligated to conduct regular spill prevention maintenance and monitoring by the State (CalGEM) and other State and regional agencies as noted above that regulate oil and gas operations, storage, equipment such as the LA County Fire, etc.

Environmental Protection and Public Health (continued)

- **What happens if there is an oil spill or gas release? Who responds?**

- If the oil operators and/or State or local authorities observe an oil leak or spill, they notify the appropriate State agencies such as CalGEM, the Air Quality Management District, LA County Fire Department, LA County Sanitation District, Regional Water Board, and local agencies such as Public Works, Signal Hill Police, and Community Development. State agencies take primary oversight of the clean-up and remediation. The City will monitor the operations through its various departments.
- Pursuant to the City Oil and Gas Code, every and any failure or rupture of a pipeline on private or public property shall immediately be reported to 911, local police, local fire authority, and public works. The owner, owner's agent, or the contractor shall then contact the City Oil Services Coordinator (OSC) to report the incident and attend their follow-up inspection. If the OSC cannot be contacted within 24 hours of the incident, the Director shall be contacted.

- **Are there air quality monitoring requirements near oil sites?**

- Yes. The operator and the AQMD monitor through on site and regional monitoring equipment.

- **Does the City monitor for methane leaks or other volatile gases?**

- Yes, when triggered by development as noted in the previously referenced Oil and Gas Code and the City Project Development Guide.
- For properties not under development, the City relies on State authorities and local operators to monitor for unauthorized gas releases and to alert the City. The routine inspections by the City may also assist in notifying these agencies of any potential visual concerns.

Transparency, Public Reporting, and Resident Involvement

- **How can residents access records or reports about oil and gas operations in Signal Hill? Where can I find inspection reports or violations issued to operators?**
 - A public records request can be made through the City Clerk.

- **What should I do if I see suspicious activity at an oil operations site?**
 - Every oil operation within the City is required to have and maintain a 24 hour emergency phone number posted on the site and visible from the public right of way. The best option is to call the operator using contact information posted at the site.
 - You may then contact State or local authorities to follow up.

- **How can residents report odors, leaks, or other concerns related to oil and gas operations?**
 - The best option is to call the operator. Operators are required to post contact information at each well site. You may also call our Oil Services Coordinator 562-989-7340.

Decommissioning and Future of Oil and Gas Operations

- **What is the process for permanently closing, plugging, and abandoning an oil well?**
 - The oil operator must submit required forms and information to the State (CalGEM). CalGEM prepares an authorization letter which acts as their State issued permit to abandon the well.
 - The oil operator must submit the approved CalGEM permit to the City in order for the City to issue the City Well Abandonment Permit.
 - CalGem staff, the City Oil Services Coordinator, and the City Oil Services consultant observe the abandonment process and document the well head testing following abandonment prior to sealing the well head, attaching a vent cone, and backfilling the access area, then surface reclamation and remediation operations are conducted.
 - The oil operator must submit well abandonment records to CalGEM who reviews and approves the procedures.
 - The oil operator must submit the final State (CalGEM) closed/approved permit to the City in order for the City to close the City permit.

- **How does the City ensure that abandoned wells are safe and pose no risk to future development?**
 - The City relies on the State to provide the permitting process and inspections before completion of a well abandonment permit. The City's permits and inspections compliment this process as a secondary measure. The well abandonment procedures noted above are established by the State (CalGEM) and the City Oil and Gas Code. When CalGEM and other local agencies with oversight close out their individual permits, they document authorized work that has been completed satisfactorily. The City requests all such documents in order to close out City permits.

- ***Decommissioning and Future of Oil and Gas Operations***
(continued)

- **Is there a plan to phase out oil and gas operations in Signal Hill?**

- The City's historic method to reduce the oil operations footprint citywide has been development. Development of commercial centers, auto dealerships, the hilltop and other residential neighborhoods have resulted in abandonment of thousands of active and idle wells. Pursuant to the City Oil and Gas Code Section 16.16.010, Drilling Prohibited, the City has only allowed new wells within approved drill sites since 1990.

The City does not have the legal authority to require the decommissioning of any wells or tanks associated with oil operations if they have valid permits issued by CalGEM.

California Law and Senate Bill 1137 (SB 1137)

- What is Senate Bill 1137 (SB 1137), and how does it affect oil and gas operations in California?
 - SB 1137 prohibits the State from issuing new permits for new wells or rework permits for existing wells within 3200 feet of sensitive receptors. The legislation contained within SB 1137 does not require the plugging and abandonment of existing wells or require any action related to idle wells. All idle wells would continue being managed in accordance with State Idle Well Regulations and the Signal Hill Oil and Gas Code.

- **Does SB 1137 prohibit new oil wells in Signal Hill?**
 - Yes, see details above.

- **What are the new setback requirements under SB 1137? How do they affect drilling near homes, schools, and other sensitive areas?**
 - SB 1137 doesn't allow any new wells to be drilled within 3200 feet of sensitive receptors as defined by the bill.

- **Does SB 1137 apply to existing oil wells, or only to new wells?**
 - Only to new wells.

- **How does SB 1137 affect the City's ability to issue local permits for oil and gas activities?**
 - The City requires a CalGEM permit before any City permit can be issued in order to drill new wells, and SB 1137 prohibits CalGEM from issuing permits.

- **What additional health and safety protections are required for existing wells under SB 1137?**
 - SB 1137 requires additional leak monitoring and detection for all existing wells and production facilities within 3200 feet of sensitive receptors.

California Law and Senate Bill 1137 (Continued)

- **How is California Law and Senate Bill 1137 (SB 1137) being implemented, and what role does the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) play in enforcing it?**
 - The State is currently in the rulemaking process for developing permanent regulations for implementing SB 1137. Until the permanent regulations are finalized and adopted, the State is implementing SB 1137 pursuant to the Emergency Rulemaking process completed in January 2024 [Final Text SB 1137 First Emergency Regulations 20230106.pdf](#)