

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Division of Mineral Resources Management

Oil and Gas Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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► WELL INFORMATION

How do I know if there is oil and gas under my property?

Depending on where you live, there is a considerable variation in the likelihood of encountering hydrocarbon deposits in the subsurface. By far the area of greatest oil and gas drilling activity is the eastern third of Ohio (from Cleveland eastward). The Clinton sandstone, from 3400 feet to 5500 feet deep, is the primary target in this area. The deeper Rose Run sandstone and the shallower Berea sandstone are secondary in prominence in this area. In the southeast portion of Ohio (southeast of Cambridge), the Berea Sandstone and sandy portions of the Ohio Shale, and Oriskany Sandstone are the dominant target zones for drilling activity. A potentially prolific area of drilling activity may be the far-eastern portion of the state, from Youngstown southward, where focus is currently placed on the newly explored Marcellus Shale. In north-central Ohio activity (Morrow, Richland, Knox, Ashland, and Huron Counties) drilling activity focuses on the Trempealeau Dolomite from 2500 feet to 4500 feet deep. Finally, the oldest field in Ohio is in the northwest portion of the state. In an area encompassing Lima, Findlay, and Bowling Green, the Trenton Limestone was extensively drilled in the latter portion of the 1800s and became the first giant oilfield in the world, with over 1 billion barrels cumulatively produced. However, there has been very little activity in this area, as the reservoir has been extensively damaged by over-drilling and poor reservoir engineering practices, probably because the field was developed as the science and technology relating to oilfield development and management was in its infancy.

A geologic consultant can give you a better idea of the probability of a successful well. Keep in mind that even if the available geological information indicates a good possibility for oil or gas under your property, there may be impediments to drilling. In urbanized areas, it may be impossible to acquire the necessary leases to form a drilling unit of sufficient acreage. In other places, the pipelines through which the gas is transported may be of such a great distance, that the cost of building the necessary connections to these pipelines (sales lines) is not justified by the anticipated natural gas reserves from the well(s). In other areas the gas is sour (high hydrogen sulfide, H₂S), which would require having a "scrubber" installed, and this cannot be economically justified. In portions of Ohio the natural gas has a relatively high nitrogen content, which in turn lowers the energy content (Btu), and this brings a lower market price for the gas. Other areas are environmentally and ecologically sensitive. Extensive precautionary measures required for well drilling in these areas can be cost-prohibitive. Finally, market conditions vary extensively. The current market price of oil and gas represents a decline of approximately 60% from the peak price in the middle of summer 2008.

How can I get a copy of a record for a specific well?

Images of drilling and plugging records, survey plats and other well information are available from the Division's [Oil and Gas Well Database](#). Links to well images are found at the bottom of the Ohio Completion Report for each well. To get this report in the Database, click the plus sign next to Reports and then Completions to perform a well search by permit number or other search criteria. [Instructions on how to use the Oil and Gas Well Database](#) are available on the oil and gas well search webpage.

To successfully view multiple images per file, you may need to change your viewer. Some viewers, like QuickTime, will only view the first image. Windows Picture and Fax Viewer works well. Follow the following setup procedure: start with Explore; then Tools/Folder Options/File Types; next look for the

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.TIF extension; next click Change or Select New; finally select Windows Picture and Fax Viewer.

How can I get oil and gas well location maps?

Township maps of oil and gas wells can be purchased from the [Division of Geological Survey](#) for \$4.00, plus shipping and handling.

How can I contact an oil and gas operator?

Registered well owner information is available in the [Oil and Gas Well Database](#). To retrieve this information, click the plus sign next to Downloads and then on Active Well Owners to search for registered well owners by name or location.

How can I obtain the Division's oil and gas well database?

Contact the Division and ask for the Risk Based Data Management System (RBDMS) database. It contains comprehensive data for more than 85,000 wells permitted after 1980. For wells drilled before 1980, RBDMS has been updated with historical well card information from the Ohio Geological Survey. In all, RBDMS has information for more than 250,000 wells.

RBDMS requires Microsoft Access and at least 700mb of hard drive space to run. [RBDMS is available online to download](#) (select Setup.exe) or is available free on CD. Contact [Vickie McKinney](#) at (614) 265-6916.

► WELLS ON A PROPERTY

How can I determine if a well exists on a specific property?

An interactive map, the [Emergency Oil and Gas Well Locator](#), shows the location of all known oil and gas wells drilled in Ohio. Wells can be displayed by permitted, plugged or producing status. This map displays permanent land subdivisions, roads and permit numbers which can be used to determine if a well exists on a property. With the Address Locator, a full address can be entered to show the wells in and around a particular location. The well permit number can then be used to perform a search as discussed within the Well Information section (at top of page).

You can also [contact the Division](#) for well information. Provide an accurate geographic description of the property including county, township, section/lot number and property name. For these inquiries, street addresses can be used but permanent parcel numbers are insufficient.

How can I determine the status of a well if I found an old casing?

Contact the Division and provide the property location. Records will be checked to determine if the well was plugged. If no plugging record exists, the case will be referred to the county well inspector for a site review. The inspector will explain the plugging options to the landowner. Please use caution around any well casing.

What should be done with a well that is not producing on my property?

First contact the well owner; then if necessary, contact your county [oil and gas inspector](#). The inspector will investigate the situation and take the appropriate action.

How can I have a well plugged on my property?

Plugging a well is the responsibility of the registered well owner. If no well owner exists, the landowner can either pay to plug the well or refer it to the [Orphan Well Program](#) for plugging.

► PRODUCTION

How can I find production information for a well?

Production information dating back to 1984 is available for most wells. Production reports are submitted annually and are due March 1. When looking up an individual well in the [Oil and Gas Well](#)

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Database, production is displayed at the bottom of the Ohio Completions Report. Production by year is also available in spreadsheet form.

What can I do if I am not receiving royalty payments?

Royalty payments are determined by the terms of the lease and are a contractual matter between the landowner and the well owner. Contact the owner of the well to determine why royalty payments have not been received. If the issue is not resolved, contact an attorney.

How can I find out the wellhead prices for oil and natural gas at a given time, and how can I be sure that my royalty payments are correct?

The Division does not regulate or determine oil & gas prices. Daily prices are available from the Ohio Oil and Gas Association.

► OWNERSHIP

Who is required to be a registered well owner?

Any individual or company intending to use a well for either domestic or commercial (non-domestic) use must become a registered well owner. Only registered well owners can apply for a permit to drill, deepen, plug-back or plug a well. The criteria for registration differ for non-domestic and domestic well owners.

How do I become a registered well owner?

There are two types of well owners: non-domestic and domestic. Different registration documents are required for the Non-domestic Well Owner and Domestic Well Owner. These and other oil and gas forms are available online. Be aware that when you purchase a well, you become responsible for plugging it.

Can I drill a well on my own property?

Yes, as long as the requirements for ownership registration and spacing are met. The Division does not drill wells but does regulate the oil and gas industries activities. It does not provide geological advice about whether a well should be drilled or not. There are several ways to determine the potential for drilling a well. The Oil and Gas Well Locator and Database can be used to view well activity in the area and, if wells are present, what typical production might be. Additionally, advice can be sought from a geological consultant or the Ohio Oil & Gas Association at (740) 587-0444.

► WELL SPACING

How close to my property line can a well be drilled?

It depends on the depth of the well (see table below) and if the well is going to be a vertical or directional well. A vertical well cannot be drilled closer than 100 feet from any property not included in the drilling unit. A directional well can conceivably be drilled right next to a property line since the spacing is based on the target location.

Spacing (1501:9-1-04 Ohio Administrative Code)			
Well Depth (ft.)	Minimum Acreage Per Well	Minimum Distance (ft.) Between Wells in Same Formation	Minimum Distance (ft.) From Unit Boundary
0-1000	1	200	100
1000-2000	10	460	230
2000-4000	20	600	300
4000 or deeper	40	1000	500

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How close can a well be drilled to a road?

A well cannot be closer than 50 feet to the traveled portion of a road which is considered to be the berm of the roadway.

How close can I build a house to a well and/or storage tanks?

The Division does not regulate distance between new homes and existing wells or tanks, so there is no minimum distance in this case. However, there are safety and environmental concerns associated with oil and gas wells and there may be occasions when heavy equipment will need to access the well. There is a 100-foot minimum setback requirement from homes for new wells and production equipment. Note: There may be local zoning restrictions that could affect building and development activity. Be sure to check with the local zoning authority prior to commencing work.

▶ LEASING

Is there a lease on my property?

If there is an unplugged well on the property, there may be a lease. A producing well would indicate that almost certainly a lease is in effect. The Division does not receive copies of leases; however, copies of leases are usually available at the county recorder's office. If a well does not exist, a title search of the property would indicate if there was a lease.

What should I know about leasing my land if someone approaches me?

The Division addresses many commonly asked questions and provides more leasing information in [Landowners and Leasing for Oil and Gas in Ohio](#).

How can I find information about a company (history, performance, reputation, etc.) to make an informed decision whether they are a 'good' company to do business with?

First, check with the Division of Mineral Resources Management to see if a company is registered in Ohio and in good standing. Contact landowners who have had wells drilled by the company. Determine from the landowner if royalties have been received in a timely manner, and if the sites have been reclaimed and are being maintained. Tank battery areas should be trimmed, painted and properly identified with signage identifying the well by lease name/well number, permit number, well owner and an emergency contact number. Talk with the well tender if possible. These references can give a good idea of what to expect from the company's practices and operations.

What is the Division's opinion or experience with a specific company?

The Division provides only the company's registered status and possible violation record. Please contact the Division's Public Information Specialist (614-265-6633) to determine if a specific company is registered to receive permits, operate wells and to receive a company's violation history.

▶ OBTAINING PERMIT

What is required to obtain a permit?

The requirements for obtaining a permit are detailed in the Topical Summary of Ohio Oil and Gas Law under the section Permit Applicant Requirements.

How long does it take to receive a permit?

Permits are issued between 10 and 21 calendar days, providing a complete application was submitted and no problems were encountered during the review for approval.

Can a permit be rushed?

Permits can be expedited for an additional fee of \$500 for drilling permits and \$250 for plugging permits. The permit will be issued within 7 days of receipt. If the well is located in a coal-bearing township, an oil and gas affidavit must be provided. Permits for a well located in an urbanized area will not be rushed.

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► **URBANIZED DRILLING**

What is urbanized drilling?

HB 278 and companion HB 299 went into effect September 16, 2004. These two House Bills gave the Division of Mineral Resources Management the sole authority to regulate the permitting, siting and production of oil and gas wells in Ohio, including urbanized areas. An urbanized area is any municipality or an unincorporated civil township with a population greater than 5,000 people as of the 2000 Ohio Census.

Are the rules and requirements different in urbanized areas for permitting and drilling wells?

Yes, urbanized rules went into effect August 11, 2005. Anyone permitting and drilling in an urban area must be familiar with these rules as the requirements are more stringent.

Are urban area fees the same as non-urban area fees?

No. Effective September 29, 2005, House Bill 66 increased the permit fees for applications to drill new wells in urban areas. The fee is \$500 for a township with a population of 5,001 to 9,999; \$750 for a township with a population of 10,000 to 14,999; \$1,000 for a township with a population exceeding 15,000; and \$1,000 for all municipal corporations regardless of population. These fees do not apply to revised drilling units, re-issues of permits already issued and plug-backs.

► **OIL AND GAS INSPECTORS**

How do I contact the oil and gas inspector for my county?

Every county has an assigned inspector and each inspector is connected with a DMRM regional office.

► **PIPELINES**

Does the Division regulate gas transmission lines?

No; the Ohio Public Utilities Commission regulates transmission lines. The Division only regulates pipelines involved in the operation of the well; for example, pipelines used to transport oil to the storage tank or gas to a point of delivery for the purpose of sale.

Are pipelines located on the lease required to be buried?

Yes, if possible. Burial should be deep enough to allow for agricultural activity.

How can I find out where pipelines are buried?

Contact the well owner or the previous landowner if possible. The Division does not keep records of pipeline installation.

Are buried pipelines required to be removed when the well is plugged?

Yes, unless the landowner signs a 'landowner waiver form' permitting the pipeline to stay. The Division requires the pipeline to be flushed of all fluids if it remains.

► **SEISMIC EXPLORATION**

Is a permit required for a company wanting to conduct seismic testing on my property?

The Division does not regulate seismic activity. Since the testing is an agreement between the company and the landowner, no permit is required.

Can I get a copy of the seismic survey results?

Most companies consider seismic information highly proprietary. There is no legal obligation of the

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seismic company or its client to share the results with the landowner, unless specified in an agreement. The company may be willing to give a general sense of the survey results as to whether they plan to drill based on the interpretation of the survey.