



## Informational Notice No. 94-5

October 27, 1994

### WELL SUSPENSION GUIDELINES

As of October 1, 1994 almost 10% of the non-abandoned wells in the province were shut-in. Less than 1/3 of these wells have been granted suspension approvals by the Branch. Sections 47 and 53 of the Drilling and Production Regulation ("the Regulation") deal with the suspension of a well. Section 53 requires a licensee to make application to suspend a well when the well has been shut-in for six consecutive months. A licensee may however apply at any time prior to the well being shut-in for six months for suspension approval. A copy of the Application for Approval of Well Operations form is attached.

Well suspension guidelines have been developed by the Branch in extensive consultation with Manitoba producers over the past two years. The objectives of the guidelines are:

- (a) to ensure the wellbore integrity of shut-in wells;
- (b) to minimize environmental and safety risks associated with shut-in wells; and
- (c) to ensure licensees make decisions regarding shut-in wells in a timely manner.

The well suspension guidelines are based on the age of the well and the period the well has been shut-in. The guidelines are the minimum operational requirements needed to obtain a suspension approval. Under Section 53, the Director may approve the suspension of a well subject to any terms and conditions considered necessary or advisable. In certain situations, such as wells with casing leaks and flowing wells, the Branch may have additional requirements.

### WELL SUSPENSION GUIDELINES

#### (1) Wells shut-in for less than 3 years

The wellbore is to be circulated or displaced to an inhibited fluid in accordance with (4). A maximum 3 year suspension approval may be granted from the date the well was shut-in.

## **(2) Wells shut-in for more than 3 years - Downhole Segregation**

The wellbore is to be circulated or displaced to an inhibited fluid in accordance with (4). The wellbore is to be segregated from the completed interval using a mechanical plug or cement plug. The Branch recommends the plug be set in accordance with the bottomhole abandonment requirements of Clauses 56(1)(a) or (b) of the Regulation. The production casing above the plug is to be pressure tested to 3500 kPa. A maximum 3 year suspension approval may be granted from the date the casing is successfully pressure tested. If the pressure test indicates a hole in the casing, the Director may require that the casing be repaired or the well abandoned.

## **(3) Wells shut-in for more than 3 years - Suspension Options**

Where a licensee is reluctant to segregate the wellbore as outlined in (2) and provides the Branch with plans to production test, recomplete, convert, abandon or sell the well in the near future, the Branch is prepared to consider;

(a) if the well is less than 5 years old, granting a maximum 3 year suspension approval or extension of the current approval, if the well is inhibited or re-inhibited, as the case may be, in accordance with (4);

(b) if the well is more than 5 years old,

(i) granting a maximum 1 year suspension approval, if the well is inhibited, or

(ii) extending the current approval for one year, or

(iii) granting a maximum 3 year suspension approval, if the well is inhibited or re-inhibited as the case may be, and the casing pressure tested to 3500 kPa .

Note: The age of a well is determined from the finished drilling date.

## **(4) Inhibition requirements**

The preferred method of inhibition is to circulate or displace the wellbore over to a non-corrosive inhibited fluid. Where tubing has been pulled from the well, inhibition may be accomplished by displacing the entire wellbore from surface to a non-corrosive inhibited fluid at a minimum pumping rate of 0.08m<sup>3</sup>/min (0.5 bpm). As long as tubing remains in a well, the wellbore may be inhibited using a bottomhole pump.

## **(5) Application to suspend a well**

In an application to suspend a well the licensee shall include a program of operations in accordance with the guidelines set out in this notice. The Branch will approve the application subject to any terms and conditions the Director considers necessary or advisable including a deadline for completing the suspension operations.

**(6) Suspension of a flowline**

In addition to properly suspending a well, Section 98 of the Regulation requires flowlines not being used to be suspended by

- (a) filling the flowline or segment of the line with air, fresh water or nitrogen;
- (b) isolating the flowline or segment of the line from all pressure sources; and
- (c) conducting any additional measures required by an inspector to leave the flowline in a safe condition.

**(7) Reactivation of a shut-in or suspended well**

Where the licensee intends to reactivate a well which has been shut-in for more than 6 months or at any time during the term of a suspension approval, the licensee is to notify the Virden or Waskada District Office.

**(8) Failure to suspend a well**

Where a licensee fails to take appropriate action to suspend a well in accordance with the Regulation and this notice, the Director may issue a notice under Section 123 of The Oil and Gas Act requiring the well be abandoned unless the licensee can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Director that there are reasons for not abandoning the well.

Any questions on the well suspension guidelines should be directed to Roland Massinon, Petroleum Engineer at (204) 748-1608. For more information on flowline suspensions contact either the Virden or Waskada District Offices at (204) 748-1557 and (204) 673-2472, respectively.

L.R. Dubreuil  
Director

*Cette information est également disponible en français.*