

COMMISSION SHIFT

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Orphaned Well: The Railroad Commission defines orphaned wells as “inactive, non-compliant wells that have been inactive a minimum of 12 months and the responsible operator's Organizational Report (Form P-5) has been delinquent for greater than 12 months.”¹ The Railroad Commission lists orphaned wells on a monthly report.² A list of wells remaining to be plugged with priority codes is also available.³

Texas Natural Resources Code Sec. 89.047 defines orphaned wells as wells:

- “(A) for which the commission has issued a permit;
- (B) for which production of oil or gas or another activity under the jurisdiction of the commission has not been reported to the commission for the preceding 12 months; and
- (C) whose operator's commission-approved organization report has lapsed.”

Inactive well: Inactive wells still have an active operator on file and are not necessarily “orphaned.” As defined in TAC §3.15(a)(6) an inactive well is “an unplugged well that has been spudded or has been equipped with cemented casing and that has had no reported production, disposal, injection, or other permitted activity for a period of greater than 12 months.” The Railroad Commission lists inactive wells on its monthly Inactive Well Aging Report.

Shut-in: A well that has been inactive for less than 12 months.

Active operation: As defined in TAC §3.15(a)(1), active operation is “regular and continuing activities related to the production of oil and gas for which the operator has all necessary permits. In the case of a well that has been inactive for 12 consecutive months or longer and that is not permitted as a disposal or injection well, the well remains inactive for purposes of this section, regardless of any minimal activity, until the well has reported production of at least five barrels of oil for oil wells or 50 Mcf of gas for gas wells each month for at least three consecutive months, or until the well has reported production of at least one barrel of oil for oil wells or at least one Mcf of gas for gas wells each month for 12 consecutive months.”⁴

P-13 Wells: Wells initially permitted by the RRC as oil and gas wells, but are either dry holes or otherwise inactive. An operator must plug the well to the base of useable quality water and may then convey the well to the landowner as a water well. The modern form used by the RRC to convey the well is called Form P-13.⁵

Abandoned Well: “Abandoned” is an ambiguous term often used interchangeably with the terms “orphaned” and “inactive,” which can be confusing. Abandoned wells may have ceased production and been properly plugged by the operator, or they may be inactive and unplugged or orphaned without a responsible operator on file.

¹ Railroad Commission. Orphan Wells With Delinquent P-5 Greater Than 12 Months.

<https://rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/research-and-statistics/well-information/orphan-wells-12-months/>

² Ibid.

³ Railroad Commission. State Managed Well Plugging. <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/environmental-cleanup-programs/state-managed-plugging/>

⁴ Railroad Commission. Inactive Well Aging Report.

<https://www.rrc.texas.gov/oil-and-gas/compliance-enforcement/hb-2259-hb-3134-inactive-well-requirements/inactive-well-aging-report-iwar/>

⁵ Railroad Commission. Application of Landowner to Condition an Abandoned Well for Fresh Water Production.

<https://www.rrc.texas.gov/media/ltcaukal/finalp-13-92104.pdf>