



Draft Regulations Update

Protecting Communities from Health Impacts of Oil Production

December 31, 2020

The Department of Conservation's California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) is committed to transparency as it works to establish science-based health and safety regulations to protect communities and workers from the impacts of oil extraction activities. Consistent with Executive Order N-79-20, CalGEM planned to release its draft regulations this month, but this timeline has been extended to enable input from an independent panel of public health experts, which took longer to assemble than anticipated. CalGEM will receive guidance from the public health expert panel to inform the draft regulation that CalGEM will post online -- for a minimum of 60 days of public review -- in Spring 2021.

BACKGROUND

Assembly Bill 1057 (Chapter 771, Statutes of 2019) changed the name of the century-old Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) to CalGEM and updated its mission to elevate the protection of public health, safety and the environment. Through this legislation, budgetary investments over the past two years, and new leadership, CalGEM is working on several fronts to advance this modernized mission.

In November 2019, the Department of Conservation announced that CalGEM would initiate a regulatory update to strengthen public health and safety protections for communities near oil and gas production operations. Since then, CalGEM has undertaken a robust public process to develop these new regulations, including 10 in-person meetings and over 40,000 public comments received.

Specific details of the proposed regulation are being informed by public input received over the last year, comments from other regulatory agencies, input from the new formed independent public health panel, and technical assessment by CalGEM staff. CalGEM is currently considering protective setbacks between oil production and sensitive receptors such as homes, schools and communities. CalGEM is also considering operational and engineering controls that limit or eliminate potentially harmful conditions affecting workers and nearby communities.

ENLISTING PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS

To ensure that the proposed regulations are informed by the most updated, comprehensive scientific understanding, CalGEM is engaging a range of independent public health experts from across the country. CalGEM contracted with the University of California at Berkeley to enlist a panel that includes oil and gas public health experts, epidemiologists, toxicologists, and medical experts. This is the first time CalGEM has established such a public health panel to inform a regulatory update.

Public health experts on the panel will use published scientific research and relevant studies to advise CalGEM regarding the potential type, extent, and severity of public health and safety risks for workers and communities nearby oil production operations, with a focus on understanding how these risks intensify in closer proximity to oil production.