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PRESS RELEASE

State Primer Provides Guidance in Mitigating Risks of Induced Seismic Events

Work group creates recommendations in State Primer

OKLAHOMA CITY – Thirteen states partnered through a multi-state initiative called StatesFirst this past year to share and summarize current knowledge related to earthquakes potentially caused by human activity, otherwise referred to as induced seismicity.

Today, the work group comprised of members of state oil and natural gas and geological agencies and other advisory experts from academia, industry, non-profit organizations and federal agencies released a Primer to provide a guide for regulatory agencies to evaluate and develop strategies to mitigate and manage risks of injection induced seismicity. The Primer also outlines how states can best provide information to the public in a transparent and effective manner.

“Induced seismicity is a complex issue where the base of knowledge is changing rapidly,” according to Rex Buchanan, work group co-chair and interim director of the Kansas Geological Survey. “State regulatory agencies that deal with potential injection induced seismicity should be prepared to use tools, knowledge, and expertise, many of which are offered in this Primer, to prepare for and respond to potential occurrences of induced seismicity.”

The primer primarily focuses on potential induced seismicity associated with Class II disposal wells. Injection wells are currently regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act through the Underground Injection Control Program (UIC). The UIC program through primacy delegation by the U.S. EPA, is administered by certain states due to their in-depth knowledge of local industry operations and geology.

In its assessment, the work group observed that the majority of disposal wells in the United States do not pose a hazard for induced seismicity; however most cases of felt injection-induced earthquake activity has generally been associated with direct injection into basement rocks or injection into overlying formations with permeable avenues of communication with the basement rocks, and in proximity to faults of concern.

In areas where induced seismicity is thought to have occurred, the Primer also identifies the range of multi-disciplinary approaches states have used to manage and mitigate risks, discusses scientific methods for evaluating cause, identifies faults of concern, and distinguishes risks and hazards.

“Overall the risk of induced seismicity for oil and gas operation is still low,” said Rick Simmers, work group co-chair and chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management. “It is clear that local factors in different parts of the country present different levels of risk. Because of this, risk management, mitigation, and response strategies are most effective when developed considering specific local geology, surface conditions as well as other local situations.”

To download the Primer or to view an in-depth Webinar featuring commentary from key work group participants, visit www.statesfirstinitiative.org.



States First is a STATE led effort. Governors, regulators, and policy leaders from oil and gas producing states across the country have partnered with the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission and Ground Water Protection Council in this endeavor.

The Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission is a multi-state government organization with a mission to conserve and maximize domestic oil and natural gas resources while protecting health, safety and the environment. The Ground Water Protection Council is a national association of state water-protection officials.

This joint initiative allows a unique mix of regulatory experts, state policy and technical staff from across the country to come together and to share the way they do business, review internal operations, react quickly to rapidly emerging technologies and opens up opportunities for extrapolating effective practices from one state to another.

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