

California Halts Fracking Waste Injections; Fears "Danger To Life, Health, & Natural Resources"



Submitted by [Tyler Durden](#) on 07/19/2014 19:15 -0400

Seven independent oil companies have been ordered to halt state-approved wastewater injection work this week, according to [The Bakersfield Californian](#), The cessation of fracking is out of concern they may be contaminating Kern County drinking water. As [ProPublica reports](#), The state's Division of Oil and Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) is warning that they **may be injecting their waste into aquifers that could be a source of drinking water, and stating that their waste disposal "poses danger to life, health, property, and natural resources."**

[As The Bakersfield Californian reports,](#)

Seven independent oil companies have been ordered to halt state-approved wastewater injection work starting noon Monday out of concern they may be contaminating Kern County drinking water.

Emergency orders issued Wednesday by the California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources apply to 11 disposal wells east and northeast of Bakersfield. About 100 water wells are located within a mile radius of the disposal wells.

Oil and water officials say the wells may have injected "produced water" -- the toxic and sometimes radioactive liquid that comes up during oil production -- and possibly injected fracking fluid at relatively shallow depths that contain relatively low salinity, oil-free water suitable for drinking and irrigation.

State officials said they have found no evidence the underground injections, some approved by DOGGR as long ago as the 1970s and others very recently, have ever contaminated drinking or irrigation water. Pollution has not been ruled out, however, as regulators conduct site inspections and await test results and other information from the companies.

DOGGR's action has come amid a year-old crackdown on industry practices for disposing of oil field fluids.

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"We need to make sure that the water that they're going after, if it's potable now, let's make sure that it stays that way and we're not injecting produced water," said Jason Marshall, chief deputy director of DOGGR's parent agency, the state Department of Conservation.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board issued orders Wednesday concurrent with DOGGR's action. Its letters to the same seven companies set deadlines for turning over groundwater samples, analytical data and technical reports.

"Our orders are focused on the (geological) formation where the injection happened and looking at the quality of that formation water," said Jonathan Bishop, chief deputy director for the State Water Resources Board.

Fortunately, he said, it appears a "large proportion" of the wells' injection zones are at a much deeper depth than the nearby water wells.

While that's "good news," he said, the state lacks data on many of the surrounding private wells. Inspectors are trying to gather such information now, he added.

But some of the injection wells at issue seem to be within 500 feet of the depth of the water wells.

"That is of more concern to us," he said.

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This comes on the heels of [earthquake concerns we reported previously](#) and [NY's fracking setback](#).