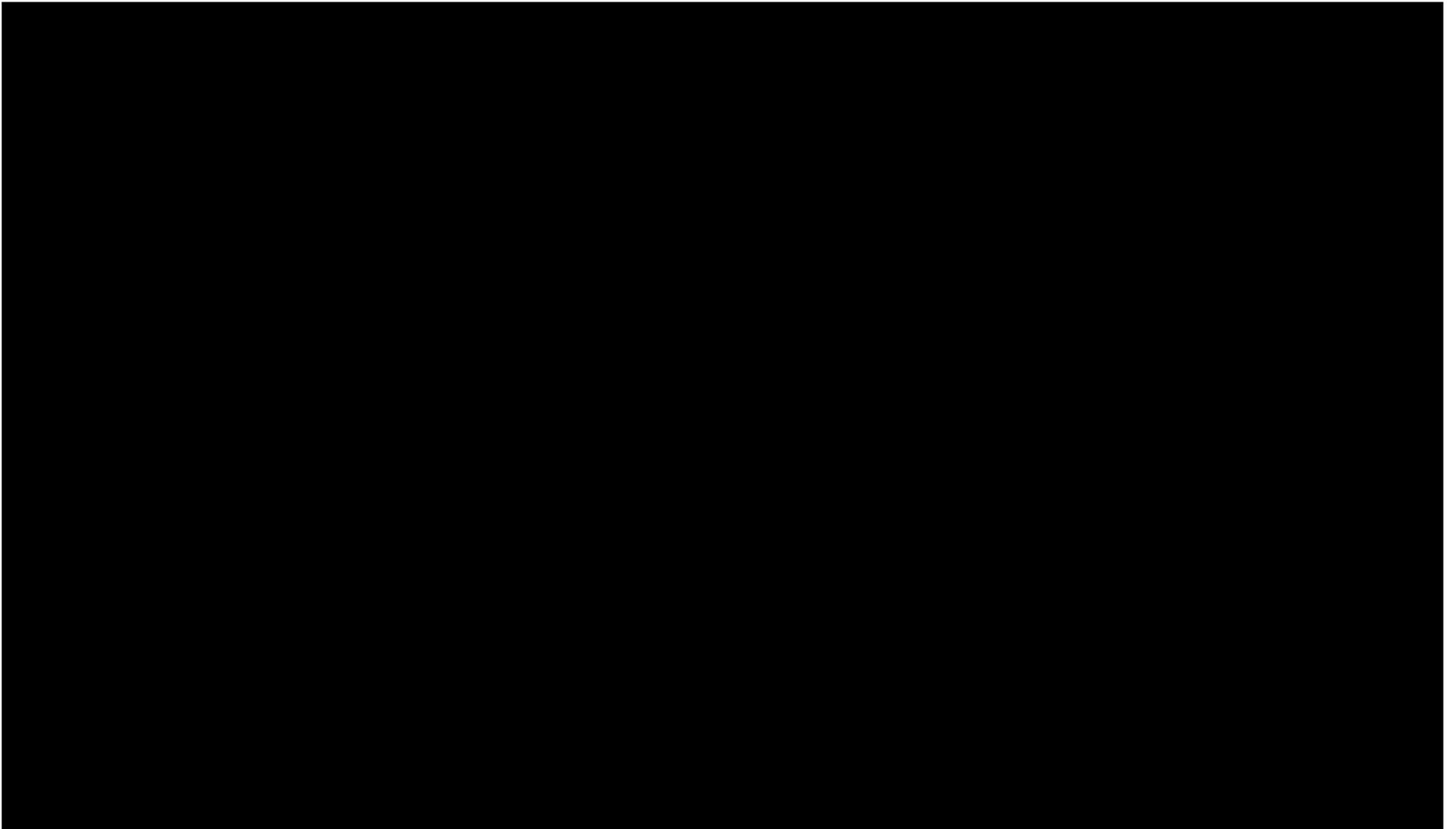


Seismicity studies heat up as TexNet expands

Dozen monitoring stations being deployed to Permian Basin

By Mella McEwen mmcewen@mrt.com Updated 11:29 pm, Thursday, March 23, 2017



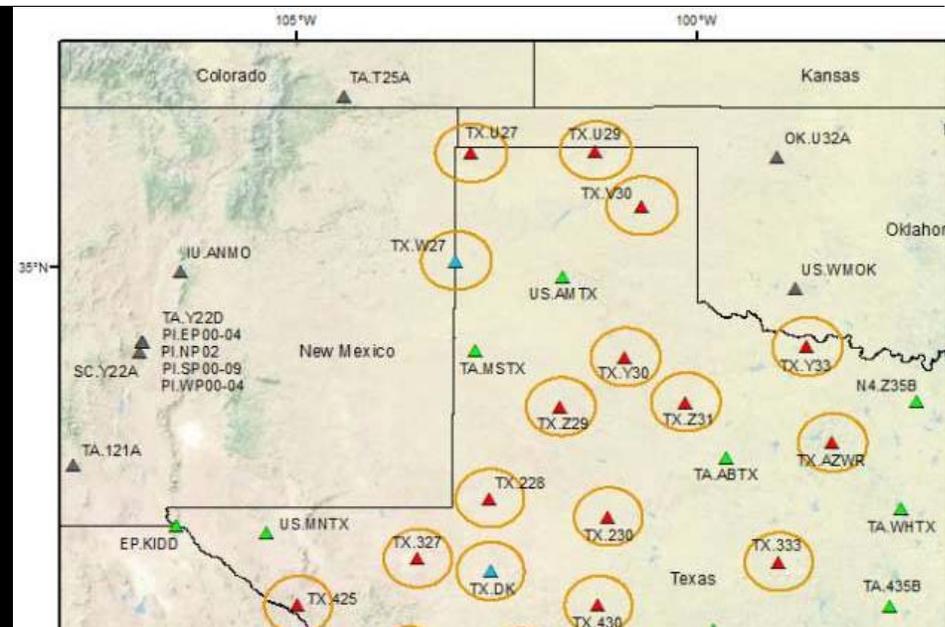
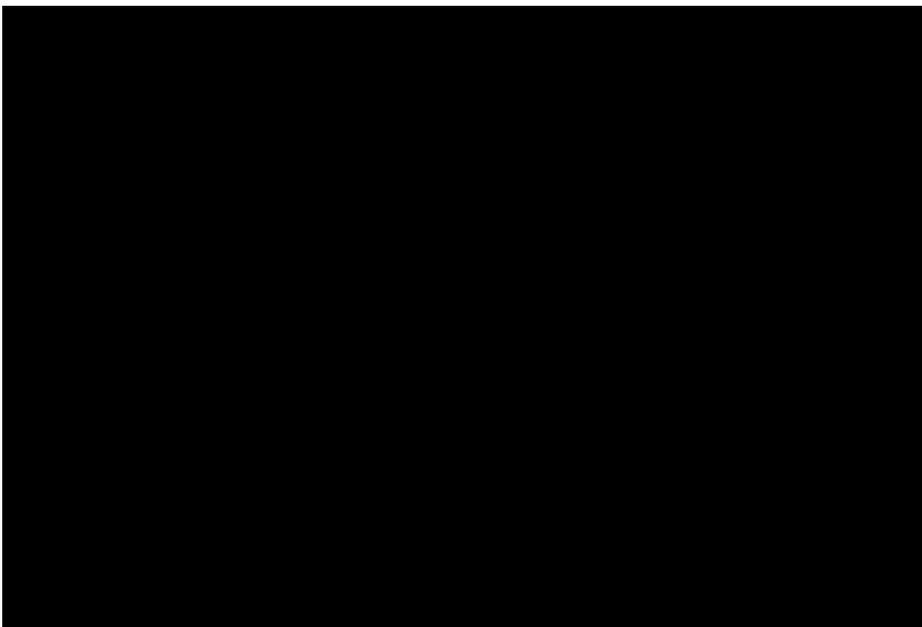


Photo: Bureau Of Economic Geology At The University Of Texas

TexNet Seismic Monitoring [monitoring stations map](#).

Seismic events that have rattled residents and the oil and gas industry from the Fort Worth area through Oklahoma was the focus of the Permian Basin Petroleum Association's membership luncheon at Midland Country Club on Thursday.

"We're all aware of the issue of seismicity," said Ben Shepperd, president of the PBPA. Residents impacted by seismic events "want answers. We want answers."

Peter Hennings, head geologist for the Center for Integrated Seismicity Research (CISR) in the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas told the gathering "there is no doubt fluid injection can cause earthquakes and does from time to time."

He pointed out pressures from the injected fluids can, in time find their way to existing, perhaps dormant, faults and the stress from the pore pressure can trigger earthquakes.

Following a series of earthquakes in the Fort Worth area, the Texas Legislature appropriated \$4.4 million to the bureau to develop and manage the Texas Seismological Network, or TexNet. The funding has been used to acquire 22 permanent monitoring stations to augment the existing 17 and 30 portable stations that can be placed in areas that are seeing heightened activity.

Six have been placed in the Snyder area and one in the Pecos area, with six more to be deployed to the Pecos area in the near future, said Alexandros Savvaidis, TexNet

manager.

“With these stations, we’ll have the opportunity to understand the seismicity of the area and how it will change over time,” he said.

With the addition of the monitoring stations since the first of the year, researchers have been able to record more seismic activity in the Pecos area.

“I want to make it clear we’re not seeing an outbreak of earthquakes; we’re just getting better capabilities at recording very small earthquakes, and Pecos is one of those areas,” said Craig Pearson, director of the Railroad Commission’s District 8 and 8A and who joined the agency in 2014 as seismologist.

Pearson said they don’t know what is causing the Pecos-area quakes.

“It may be injection wells, it may be tectonic. I’m very hopeful about this ability to see beneath the surface,” he said.

Hennings said that the state has gone from one or two quakes a year that could be felt by people to about 15.

“Something is changing,” he said.

The goal of the research mandated by the Legislature, and which will be conducted by CISR, is to better understand natural seismicity and possibly induced seismicity, discern new strategies for disposal wells and provide education to the public, industry and government.

“Our goal is to detect and characterize seismic events, understand the triggering mechanism, assess the seismic potential of basins, conduct research to improve fluid disposal, assess the hazards of seismic events on infrastructure and improve vehicles for communication,” Hennings said.

He stressed research will be conducted in keeping with the geologic complexities of diverse areas of the state, “being realistic about how we progress from area to area.”

Initial efforts focused on the Fort Worth Basin because of its major population centers and earlier activity, Hennings said. But by this time next year, he said the center will have much more data on West Texas.

He praised the proactive involvement of both the oil and gas industry — 13 companies are providing funding and other support to the center — and regulators in seeking pragmatic solutions to the issue. Solutions are easily attainable with quality data, he said.

“The public wants solutions, but they are coming to the understanding it will take time,” he said.

TexNet will have completed the rollout of its additional monitoring stations by May and Hennings said that it will be “messy” at first as researchers learn to filter out man-made noise such as heavy trucks or hydraulic fracturing operations from seismic-related noise.

He also said all information will be posted on the center’s website for the public to see.

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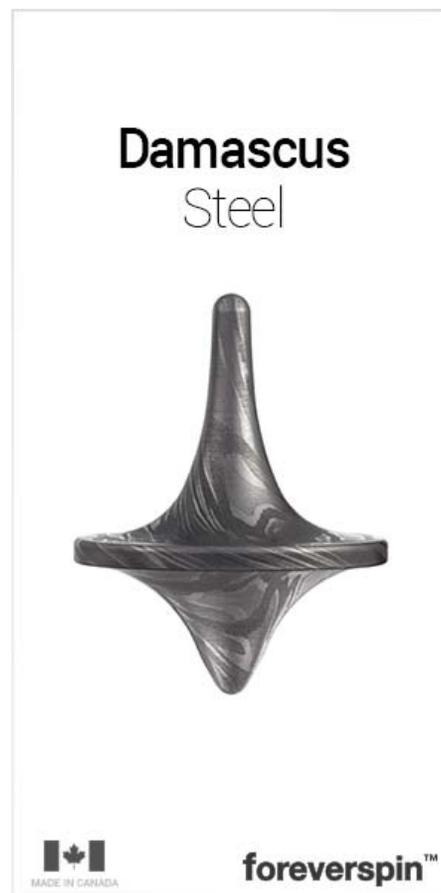
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