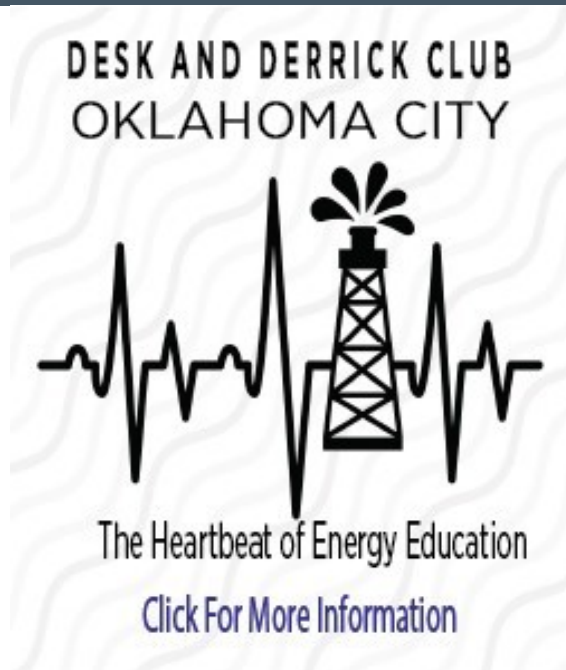




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Texas regulators launch investigation into latest series of dozens of Permian Basin earthquakes

- [July 29, 2024 \(2024-07-29T14:17:44-05:00\)](#)



A series of more than 60 earthquakes, including one that measured 5.1 magnitude in the past several days in the Permian Basin of west Texas prompted a new investigation by state regulators.



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The Texas Railroad Commission specifically is looking into salt water disposal wells and whether they, like earthquakes in recent years in Oklahoma, might have caused the increased seismic activity.

Investigators and seismic experts have narrowed their focus on disposal wells within a few miles of the Camp Springs area where there was a cluster of earthquakes. The region in question is located about 100 miles

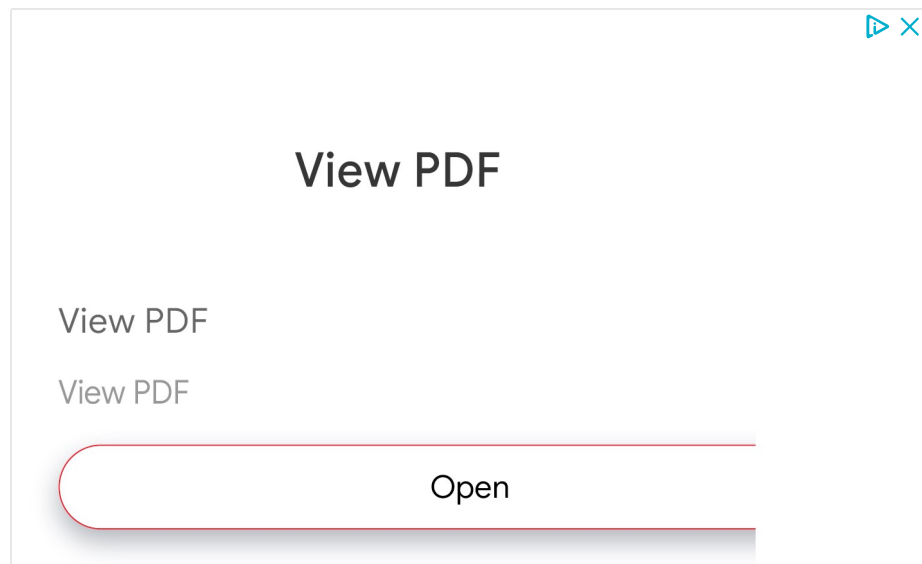
northeast of Midland—the heart of the Permian Basin.

The Railroad Commission issued a statement and explained its investigation.

“In efforts to reduce seismicity possibly caused by underground injection of produced water, several operators in the area have converted deep saltwater disposal wells to shallow saltwater disposal wells within the last year.

“RRC inspectors are out inspecting saltwater disposal wells within two and a half miles of the cluster of earthquakes this week and the RRC will evaluate next steps that can be taken to mitigate earthquakes. We’ll continue to take measures necessary to protect the environment and residents in the area,” added the RR Commission.

At least 61 earthquakes were reported in Scurry County which is about 60 miles northwest of Abilene. Following last week’s magnitude 4.9 earthquake, northeastern Scurry County and northwestern Fisher County have seen a series of tremors. The United States Geological Survey confirmed six earthquakes in West Texas on Friday, with the largest measuring 5.1. That quake’s epicenter was near Hermleigh, Texas, in Scurry County, about 60 miles west-northwest of Abilene. Moderate to strong shaking was reported near the epicenter, with very light-to-light damage possible. Weak shaking was reportedly felt in North Texas, where damage was unlikely.



Peter Hennings is a research professor at the Bureau of Economic Geology and principal investigator for the Center for Injection and Seismicity Research, according to *Houston Public Media*.

He says his team has worked to understand the causes of the increase in the number of earthquakes across Texas, particularly in the Permian Basin region, “The practice of deep injection of oil field wastewater, known as saltwater disposal, has the strongest tie to the increase in the rate of earthquakes and to the strongest earthquakes that have occurred in recent years.”

Hennings explained that when fracking projects inject wastewater, a byproduct of unconventional oil and gas development, back underground it can interact with existing geologic faults. And he says that it destabilizes them and causes earthquakes. While tens of thousands of injection wells operate in the Permian Basin, only a small percentage have been directly tied to induced earthquakes.

“We believe these earthquakes are being caused by human activity, particularly related to oil and gas operations,” stated Justin Rubinstein, a research geophysicist with the Earthquake Science Center at the U.S. Geological Survey.

Click *here* (<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2024/07/26/494971/recent-earthquakes-raise-concerns-in-permian-basin/>)for *Houston Public Media*

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