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# Shut-in disposal wells force operators to make adjustments

BY MELLA MCEWEN, MIDLAND REPORTER-TELEGRAM, TEXAS *THE TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY*

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Aug. 2-Permian Basin oil and gas operators are again adjusting to changes brought about by seismic activity.

An area along the Scurry-Fisher County line has been shaken by a cluster of earthquakes, from a 4.9-magnitude on July 22 to a 5.1 magnitude on July 26 that was felt from Midland east to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The cluster, which soared to over 80 earthquakes since last week, includes a 3.8-magnitude earthquake Tuesday and a 2-magnitude on Wednesday.

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The Railroad Commission sent investigators to inspect disposal wells within two and a half miles of the earthquake cluster. As a result of the investigators' work, the commission on Monday shut in two deep disposal wells in the area and commission staff continue to monitor wells and seismicity data in the region.

According to a commission spokesman, produced water that was destined for injection in those two wells must now be rerouted elsewhere. "There are shallow disposal wells in the area and sometimes operators may truck produced water to other facilities, but again, operators would make those determinations," the spokesman wrote in an email.

Ben Shepperd, president of the Permian Basin Petroleum Association, commented to the Reporter-Telegram by email: "We applaud the Railroad Commission taking such swift action in this case, like they have with other areas of seismic activity. Scurry County has been seismically active for a long time and I am glad the Commission is taking a hard look at the scientific evidence."

The commission spokesman noted that efforts to reduce seismicity possibly caused by underground injection of produced water included several operators in the area converting deep saltwater disposal wells to shallow saltwater disposal wells within the last year.

"Across the Permian Basin region, there has been an increase in the rate of earthquakes felt at the surface," said Peter Hennings, principal investigator for the Center for Integrated Seismicity Research (CISR) at the University of Texas' Bureau of Economic Geology. He told the   telephone interview those occurrences h  
injection of produced water.

The industry and Railroad Commission h  
rise in the rate and intensity of seismic o  
its kind operator-led response plan to ad  
Culberson-Reeves seismic response area.

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