

Public Health and Safety: Roles and Responsibilities of Agencies that Regulate Upstream Oil and Gas

This EnerFAQs briefly describes the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies that regulate upstream oil and gas facilities and operations in Alberta. “Upstream” refers to the activities of the petroleum industry before the product reaches the refinery. “Facilities” include oil and gas wells, pipelines, and production facilities. This EnerFAQs also provides information on which agency to contact when you have questions or complaints or if there is an upstream oil or gas emergency in Alberta.

A tear-away sheet is attached with contact information on whom to call in the event of an upstream oil or gas emergency. You can use this sheet to record specific contact information for your local operators and municipality or local authority.

What are operators of an upstream facility responsible for?

Each operator of an upstream facility in Alberta is responsible to ensure that the facility is constructed and operated in accordance with provincial and, when appropriate, federal requirements. Every operator must develop an emergency response plan (ERP) that appropriately addresses any risks to public safety or the environment that its facility may pose.

What if I have questions or concerns about a facility?

You may contact the facility operator directly regarding any questions or concerns about its facility.

Every upstream facility in Alberta must have a sign on it with the name and telephone number of the operator. The attached contact sheet has space for listing the name and phone numbers for upstream operators in your area.

What if there is an emergency?

In the event of an emergency, the facility operator should be contacted immediately, as it is likely to have the most up-to-date information regarding the emergency and should be able to quickly dispatch staff to the site.

What agencies are involved in upstream oil and gas in Alberta?

The following agencies are involved in upstream oil and gas in Alberta:

- Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB)
- Alberta municipalities
- Emergency Management Alberta (EMA)
- Alberta Environment (AENV)
- Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S)
- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Regional Health Authorities
- Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

- Indian Oil and Gas Canada
- National Energy Board (NEB)

What is the role of the ERCB?

The ERCB is the primary regulator of oil and gas activities in Alberta. It reviews all applications for new oil and gas facilities and is also responsible for ensuring that existing oil and gas facilities are compliant with provincial requirements.

The ERCB sets out additional requirements for upstream facilities that produce, transport, or process sour oil or gas (i.e., gas or oil containing hydrogen sulphide, or H₂S). These facilities may require a site-specific emergency response plan that appropriately addresses any risks to public safety or the environment. Each site-specific emergency response plan must be approved by the ERCB before operations may begin. The ERCB also requires operators to update emergency response plans annually to ensure that each plan remains current.

What happens if there is an emergency?

If an upstream petroleum emergency occurs, an operator must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to protect the health, safety, and welfare of people and to limit damage to property and the environment. ERCB staff are available to respond to emergencies on a 24-hour basis.

In the event of emergency—including those on First Nations lands—the ERCB takes the lead in coordinating the emergency response by the licensee or operator, the municipality in which the emergency occurs, and other provincial and federal responders. Depending upon the nature of the emergency, an emergency operation centre may be set up to ensure coordination among all the responding agencies.

How do I contact the ERCB?

To report emergencies or register complaints or concerns, contact the nearest ERCB Field Centre, available daily 24 hours toll free. Dial 310-0000, followed by the Field Centre's local number:

- Bonnyville: 780-826-5352
- Drayton Valley: 780-542-5182
- Grande Prairie: 780-538-5138
- High Level: 780-926-5399
- Medicine Hat: 403-527-3385
- Midnapore: 403-297-8303
- Red Deer: 403-340-5454
- St. Albert: 780-460-3800
- Wainwright: 780-842-7570

For general questions during business hours, contact the ERCB Customer Contact Centre by telephone at 403-297-8311 or by e-mail at Inquiries@ercb.ca.



How are Alberta local authorities involved in upstream oil and gas development?

Local authorities in cities, towns, villages, municipal districts, special areas, Métis Settlements, etc., must develop a municipal emergency plan to address emergencies of all types that could happen within their boundaries to ensure public safety. All municipal emergency plans are based on province-wide standards developed by Emergency Management Alberta (see next page). However, each municipal emergency plan is developed to address possible emergency situations unique to its local environment.

In the event of an upset or spill at an upstream petroleum facility, the ERCB will work with the facility operator, the local authority, and all other necessary responders to ensure that the incident is addressed in a manner that ensures public safety and environmental protection. Although the facility operator will most likely initiate the emergency response, the local municipal authority will take a lead role in matters affecting public safety within its jurisdiction.

Contact your local authority directly to learn more about its municipal emergency plan.

How do I contact my local authority?

There are hundreds of local authorities in Alberta. If you have questions regarding emergency preparedness in your region, you may contact your local authority or contact

- The Duty Manager at Emergency Management Alberta at 780-422-9000 (toll free by first dialling 310-0000).

The attached contact sheet has space for listing the name and phone numbers for the Emergency Management branch of your local authority.

What is the role of Emergency Management Alberta (EMA)?

EMA—the coordinating agency for the Government of Alberta for all hazards—is responsible for safety and emergency preparedness in Alberta. It coordinates provincial emergency response for all types of emergencies, including upstream petroleum emergencies. In the event of an emergency, EMA coordinates and links the response of all levels of government, the private sector, and other interested parties. EMA provides support for local authorities through its district offices.

EMA developed the *Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan* specifically to respond to upstream oil and gas emergencies. Its purpose is to direct and coordinate how the government and the oil and gas industry responds to a serious upstream emergency. The goal is to support the oil and gas operator and the local authority in protecting the public and to bring the incident safely under control. Under this plan the facility operator most likely initiates the emergency response, and the local authority is the lead in matters affecting public safety within its jurisdiction. It is essential that all the emergency plans are compatible, especially the upstream operator's emergency response plan and the municipal emergency plan.

EMA should be contacted if you have questions or concerns with respect to emergency preparedness at the provincial level. You may also contact EMA in the event of an emergency.

How do I contact EMA?

For questions:

- 780-422-9000 (toll free by calling 310-0000)

To report emergencies:

- 780-422-9000 (8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)
- 1-800-272-9600 (after hours)

Ask for the EMA Duty Manager.

What is Alberta Environment (AENV) responsible for?

AENV is responsible for the protection of the environment and the protection and management of water resources in Alberta. As part of its mandate, AENV is involved in the licensing process for some oil and gas facilities in Alberta. AENV is also the primary regulator for the reclamation of all upstream oil and gas facilities.

The ERCB and AENV have developed a coordinated approach to address spills, leaks, and releases from upstream oil and gas facilities. Each agency has agreed to immediately inform the other when contacted about an emergency related to an oil and gas facility.

Either the ERCB or AENV should be contacted if you have a question regarding a leak or spill related to an upstream oil or gas facility. AENV should also be contacted if you have concerns with respect to reclamation.

How do I contact AENV?

For emergencies and to report complaints and concerns:

- 1-800-222-6514

Who is responsible for workplace health and safety?

The responsibility for workplace health and safety in Alberta rests with Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S), a division of Alberta Human Resources and Employment. WH&S also has specific responsibilities for emergency planning. Its main goal is to ensure the protection of the health and safety of workers at worksites, including all upstream oil and gas facilities throughout Alberta. To do this, WH&S may conduct inspections of worksites and require corrective action if a worksite does not meet legislated standards.

You may contact WH&S if you have questions or concerns regarding workplace health and safety.

How do I contact WH&S?

For information or to report emergencies:

- 1-866-415-8690
- Web site www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs

What is the role of Alberta Health and Wellness and the regional health authorities?

Health services throughout Alberta are provided by nine regional health authorities (RHAs) located throughout the province. The RHAs are responsible for hospitals, continuing-care facilities, community health services, and public health programs.

RHAs play a role in the regulation of oil and gas by providing input into site-specific emergency response plans, municipal emergency plans, and the provincial *Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan*. If necessary, they will also respond directly to emergencies arising from an oil and gas incident after consulting with the local director of disaster services or the emergency operation centre.

You may contact your RHA if you have questions about public health and safety during upstream oil and gas operations or emergencies.

How do I contact my RHA?

If you do not know which regional health authority you belong to, you can find out by contacting Alberta Health and Wellness at 780-427-7164 (toll free by dialling 310-0000 or on its Web site at www.health.gov.ab.ca).

Which agency is responsible for oil and gas development on First Nations reserve lands?

Upstream oil and gas development on First Nations reserves is regulated by Indian Oil and Gas Canada, a federal agency, in cooperation with the ERCB. A party wishing to construct and operate an upstream oil and gas facility on reserve lands must obtain approvals from both agencies. The ERCB's regulations for protection of public safety and the environment apply to oil and gas facilities on reserve lands. The ERCB and Indian Oil and Gas Canada help each other by sharing information about spills, oil and gas facility inspections, well site inspections, and emergencies.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is responsible for emergency preparedness on reserve lands. Each reserve in Alberta has developed an emergency operations plan that addresses specific emergency concerns. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, in cooperation with Emergency Management Alberta, has also appointed two First Nations Emergency Response Officers, who may be contacted in the event of an emergency on First Nations reserve lands.

You may contact Indian Oil and Gas Canada or the ERCB to learn more about the regulation of upstream facilities on reserve lands. In the event of an emergency, you may also contact one of the First Nations Emergency Response Officers.

Whom do I contact for questions or emergencies on First Nations reserve lands?

For questions, concerns, or complaints, contact

- Indian Oil and Gas Canada: toll free: 1-800-567-9604 (8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.)
or
- ERCB Customer Call Centre: 403-297-8311 (toll free by dialling 310-0000)

To report emergencies:

- Emergency Management Alberta: 780-422-9000 (8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.);
1-800-272-9600 (after hours). Ask for the EMA Duty Manager.

What is the Role of Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch?

The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada (HC-FNIHB) provides health services on First Nations reserves and is the equivalent to a regional health authority on First Nations reserves. HC-FNIHB is responsible for community health services and public health programs.

In a similar manner to a regional health authority, HC-FNIHB plays a role in the regulation of oil and gas by providing input into site-specific emergency response plans, municipal emergency plans, and the Alberta *Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan*. If necessary, HC-FNIHB will also respond directly to emergencies arising from an upstream petroleum emergency following consultation with the local director of disaster services or the emergency operation centre.

Members of First Nations communities may contact HC-FNIHB if you have questions about public health and safety during upstream petroleum oil and gas operations or emergencies.

How do I contact HC-FNIHB?

You may contact HC-FNIHB by calling 780-495-2712, the main contact number for all First Nations communities within Alberta.

In the event of an emergency, you may contact the First Nations Alberta 24-hour emergency pager at 403-470-2677.

What is the National Energy Board (NEB) Responsible for?

The NEB is a federal agency that regulates the construction and operation of pipelines that cross provincial or national boundaries. The NEB is responsible for ensuring that appropriate emergency response plans are in place for pipelines under its jurisdiction. Although the NEB does not currently regulate any pipelines transmitting sour gas in Alberta, it might do so in the future.

One of the NEB's obligations is to promote safety, environmental protection, and environmental efficiency in the Canadian public interest.

The ERCB and the NEB have a mutual aid agreement whereby each agency may help the other in a pipeline incident investigation and/or emergency response. This agreement also includes exchanging information. Both parties agree to provide the other with information on relevant facilities within Alberta, as well as with lists of contacts, including business and emergency numbers.

How do I Contact the NEB?

To report a pipeline emergency:

- Transportation Safety Board's 24-hour hot line: 819-997-7887

To report emergencies:

- NEB: 403-807-9473

General inquiries:

- 403-292-4800, or toll free 1-800-899-1265

Additional Information

For additional information on the ERCB or its processes or if you have general questions about oil and gas in the province of Alberta, contact the ERCB's Customer Contact Centre, Monday to Friday (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.), at 403-297-8311.

This EnerFAQs is one in a series.

[No. 1: What Is the Energy Resources Conservation Board?](#)

[No. 2: Having Your Say at an ERCB Hearing](#)

[No. 3: Inspections and Enforcement of Energy Developments in Alberta](#)

[No. 4: All About Critical Sour Wells](#)

[No. 5: Explaining ERCB Setbacks](#)

[No. 6: Flaring and Incineration](#)

[No. 7: Proposed Oil and Gas Development: A Landowner's Guide](#)

[No. 8: Coalbed Methane](#)

[No. 9: The ERCB and You: Agreements, Commitments, and Conditions](#)

[No. 10: Public Health and Safety: Roles and Responsibilities of Agencies That Regulate Upstream Oil and Gas](#)

[No. 11: All About Appropriate Dispute Resolution \(ADR\)](#)

[No. 12: Oil Sands](#)

[No. 13: Emergency Response Preparedness in the Energy Industry](#)

Every year the ERCB collects, compiles, and publishes a large amount of technical data and information about Alberta's energy development and resources for use by both industry and the general public. This includes raw data, statistics, information on regulations, policies, and decisions, and hearing materials.

Publications may either be viewed at the ERCB library or obtained from Information Services. Both are housed on the main floor of the ERCB head office in Calgary. Publications may also be downloaded free of charge from the ERCB Web site www.ercb.ca.

To obtain a print or CD copy of a specific publication, contact ERCB Information Services by phone (403-297-8190), fax (403-297-7040), or e-mail Infoservices@ercb.ca.

My Contacts

Local Operators

Company / Operator name	Name of contact and telephone number	
	Location	Type of operation

Company / Operator name	Name of contact and telephone number	
	Location	Type of operation

Local ERCB Field Centre (24 hours)

My Field Centre	24-hour telephone number (toll free by first calling 310-0000)
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My Municipality or Local Authority

Name of contact	Telephone number
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My Regional Health Authority

Name of contact	Telephone number
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ERCB Offices Customer Contact Centre	Inquiries@ercb.ca	403-297-8311
Head Office	640 – 5 Avenue SW Calgary, Alberta T2P 3G4	403-297-8311

Emergency Management Alberta	Disaster Services Duty Manager 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.	780-422-9000
	After hours	1-800-272-9600
Alberta Environment	24-hour Environment Hotline	1-800-222-6514
	Cell phone (Telus Mobility System only)	#7378