

**SUBJECT: OTHER THAN NORMAL SPACING AND TARGET AREAS FOR  
PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WELLS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Other than normal spacing (OTNS) for oil or gas wells pertains to areas within British Columbia where insufficient area exists for normal spacing areas. Areas which require OTNS occur adjacent to the provincial borders, along the survey system boundaries between the Dominion Land Survey (DLS) Peace River Block and the portion of the province surveyed under National Topographic Survey (NTS) standards, or adjacent to some Protected Areas. In other instances, such as horizontal well bores crossing spacing areas, OTNS may be invoked to facilitate drilling and production operations.

Target areas prescribe drilling setbacks within spacing area boundaries and prevent unfair production practices from occurring. The productive portion of a well bore must always be contained wholly within the target area or the well may be subject to off-target production penalties.

## **GENERAL**

### *Spacing Areas*

Normal spacing areas for petroleum and natural gas are described by sections 9(1)(a)(b) and 10(1)(a)(b) of the Drilling and Production Regulation (the D&P Regulation). The definition of a normal spacing area for a petroleum well is one quarter section within the DLS Peace River Block or one unit under the NTS system. The normal spacing area for a natural gas well is one section within the DLS system or an area comprised of 4 units in a 2 unit by 2 unit configuration under the NTS system.

OTNS is covered by Section 3 of the Petroleum and Natural Gas General Regulation (General Regulation). The Minister of Energy and Mines may designate OTNS areas where the boundary of a location does not coincide with the sides of a normal spacing area. The Minister may also specify OTNS where, in the opinion of the Minister, drilling and production operations will be facilitated.

### *Target Areas*

The standard target area for a petroleum well is described by Section 9(2) of the D&P Regulation as inside but not nearer than 100m to the sides of the spacing area. The standard target area for a natural gas well is described by Section 10(2) of the D&P Regulation as inside but not nearer than 250m to the sides of the spacing area. These setbacks generally apply to both normal spacing and OTNS areas, unless



otherwise stated. Section 3(2)(a) of the General Regulation allows the minister to alter the defined target areas within OTNS areas. Target area setbacks for OTNS areas generally may be altered only when the spacing area abuts Protected Areas and there is no infringement on any other party.

### ***Good Engineering Practice***

As a reference, other regulatory vehicles exist to facilitate oil and gas drilling and production operations and may preclude the need for normal spacing area alterations. Under both Good Engineering Practice (GEP) and Experimental Scheme approvals, companies may gain relief from target area constraints imposed by normal spacing areas within a contiguous land block. For further information regarding these options, contact the Manager, Reservoir Engineering and Geology, Oil and Gas Commission at (250) 952-0294, or visit the Commission's website at <http://www.ogc.gov.bc.ca/formschecklists.asp#Reservoir%20Engineering>.

## **PROCEDURE**

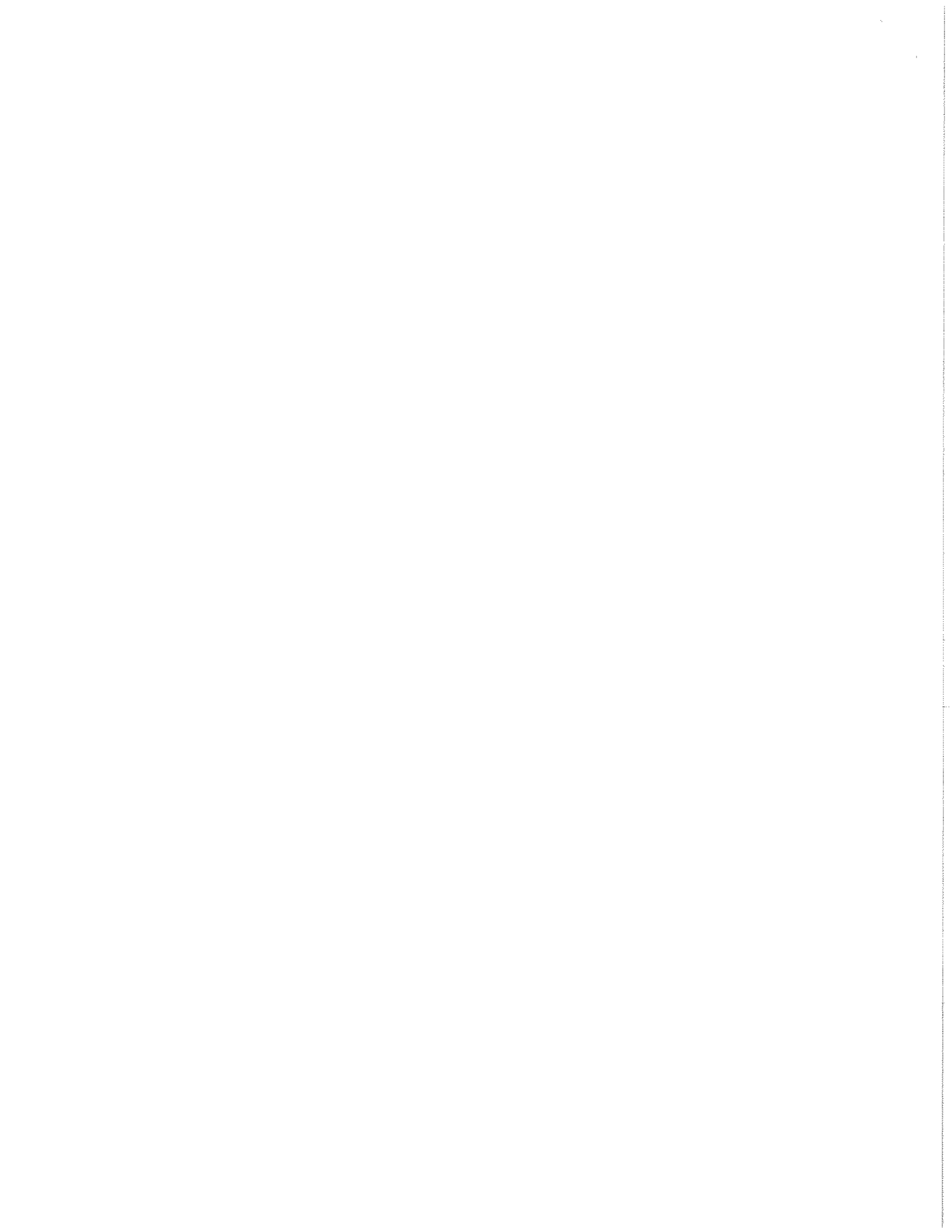
### ***OTNS***

OTNS is most often made necessary by the vagaries of the contacts along the provincial borders with Alberta, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and the United States. Also, the acquisition of petroleum and natural gas rights is prohibited under many Protected Areas. OTNS is required when a portion of a normal spacing area falls within such a Protected Area. In both instances, identification of OTNS areas should be clarified with the Petroleum Lands Branch, prior to the acquisition of petroleum and natural gas title, whenever practicable. As a general rule in these instances, the fractional spacing area is combined with the nearest complete spacing area to form a larger than normal spacing area.

Application for OTNS is mandatory in the case of reduced spacing required to facilitate oil and gas operations that occur exclusive of a GEP or an Experimental Scheme, as well as for larger than normal spacings required when the productive interval of a horizontal well bore transects more than one normal spacing area within the same productive horizon. Subject to an appeal period for affected parties to comment on the proposed spacing modification and upon favourable review of the application, the Minister may then approve a specified OTNS area.

### ***Maps***

To aid industry in predetermination of OTNS required by survey related cases, the Ministry of Energy and Mines has published a set of two maps which identify all the irregular natural gas OTNS areas surrounding the DLS Peace River Block (Crown Publications Stock Number GM14). Also available is a map that identifies all irregular natural gas OTNS areas created by the provincial border with Alberta in southeast British Columbia (Crown Publications Stock Number GM15). Orders to Crown Publications may be made by phone at (250) 386-4636 or via the internet at <http://www.crownpub.bc.ca>. Where not defined by these two map sets, OTNS areas occurring along the BC/Alberta border have conventionally been created by combining the incomplete portions of normal spacing areas adjacent to the border with the complete normal spacing area located directly to the west.



*Application*

A letter of application for OTNS must be made to the Director, Petroleum Lands Branch. The application should include a written summary stating the basis for which OTNS is considered necessary, title data, maps, proposed operations, prospective horizons and any other pertinent data relevant to the request.

All OTNS applications should be forwarded to:

Gerald German  
Director of Petroleum Lands  
Energy and Minerals Division  
Ministry of Energy and Mines  
PO Box 9329 Stn. Prov. Gov't  
6<sup>th</sup> floor, 1810 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8W 9N3

Telephone: 250-952-0334  
Facsimile: 250-952-0331  
Email: [Gerald.German@gems7.gov.bc.ca](mailto:Gerald.German@gems7.gov.bc.ca)



Joan Hesketh  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Energy and Minerals Division

March 29, 2001

MPCAA/B/C

For further information contact:

Mark Hayes  
Senior Reservoir Geologist  
Petroleum Lands Branch  
PO Box 9326, Stn Prov Gov't  
6<sup>th</sup> floor, 1810 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8W 9N3  
Phone: 250-952-0364  
Fax: 250-952-0331  
Email: [Mark.Hayes@gems3.gov.bc.ca](mailto:Mark.Hayes@gems3.gov.bc.ca)

