

2023 Kansas Statutes

55-179. Same; responsibility for remedial actions; hearings; orders; plugging. (a) If the commission determines that a well is an abandoned well and has reason to believe that any person is legally responsible for the proper care and control of such well, the commission shall cause any such person to come before the commission in accordance with the provisions of the Kansas administrative procedure act. If the commission finds that any person is, in fact, legally responsible for the proper care and control of such well, the commission may issue any orders obligating any such person to plug the well or to otherwise cause such well to be brought into compliance with all rules and regulations of the commission and may order any other remedies as may be just and reasonable. Proceedings for reconsideration and judicial review of any order shall be conducted in the manner provided pursuant to K.S.A. 55-606, and amendments thereto.

(b) A person that is legally responsible for the proper care and control of an abandoned well shall be limited to one or more of the following:

(1) Any person causing pollution or loss of usable water through the well, including any operator of an injection well, disposal well or pressure maintenance program;

(2) the most recent operator to produce from or inject or dispose into the well, but if no production or injection has occurred, the person that caused the well to be drilled.

A person shall not be legally responsible for a well pursuant to this paragraph if: (A) Such person can demonstrate that the well was physically operating or was in compliance with temporary abandonment regulations immediately before such person transferred or assigned the well to an operator with an active operator's license; and (B) a completed report of transfer was filed pursuant to commission regulations if transferred or assigned after August 28, 1997;

(3) the person that most recently accepted responsibility for the well by accepting an assignment or by signing an agreement or other written document, between private parties, in which the person accepted responsibility. Accepting an assignment of a lease, obtaining a new lease or signing an agreement or any other written document between private parties shall not in and of itself create responsibility for a well located upon the land covered thereby unless such instrument adequately identifies the well and expressly transfers responsibility for such well;

(4) the operator that most recently filed a completed report of transfer with the commission in which such operator accepted responsibility for the well or, if no completed report of transfer has been filed, the operator that most recently filed a well inventory with the commission in which such operator accepted responsibility for the well. Any modification made by commission staff of any such documents shall not alter legal responsibility unless the operator was informed of such modification and approved of the modification in writing;

(5) the operator that most recently plugged the well, if no commission funds were used; and

(6) any person that does any of the following to an abandoned well without authorization from the commission: (A) Tamper with or removes surface or downhole equipment that was physically attached to the well or inside the well bore; (B) intentionally destroys, buries or damages the well; (C) intentionally alters the physical status of the well in a manner that will result in more than a de minimis increase in plugging costs; or (D) conducts any physical operations upon the well.

(c) If the commission determines that no person is legally responsible for the proper care and control of an abandoned well, or that each legally responsible person is dead, no longer in existence, insolvent or can no longer be found, then the commission shall cause such well to be plugged as funds become available. The cost of such plugging shall be paid by the commission from the abandoned oil and gas well fund created pursuant to K.S.A. 55-192, and amendments thereto.

(d) The validity of any order issued by the commission prior to July 1, 2021, shall not be affected by the provisions of this section but shall apply to any determination of responsibility regarding any abandoned well.

(e) As used in this section, "abandoned well" means a well that is not claimed on an operator's license that is active with the commission and is unplugged, improperly

plugged or no longer effectively plugged.

History: L. 1986, ch. 201, § 31; L. 1988, ch. 356, § 165; L. 1993, ch. 62, § 1; L. 1996, ch. 263, § 7; L. 2001, ch. 191, § 6; L. 2021, ch. 28, § 6; July 1.