

US rig count decreases by 3

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HOUSTON — The number of rigs actively exploring for oil and natural gas in the U.S. decreased by three this week to 1,653.

Houston-based drilling systems provider Baker Hughes Inc. said Friday 977 rigs were exploring for natural gas and 665 for oil. Eleven were listed as miscellaneous. A year ago this week, the rig count stood at 1,009.

Of the major oil- and gas-producing states, the biggest gain was in New Mexico with six new rigs, Pennsylvania and Wyoming with two each and Louisiana and California each gained one. Texas lost six rigs, Oklahoma declined by five, North Dakota decreased by three and Arkansas by one. Alaska, Colorado and West Virginia remained unchanged.

The rig tally peaked at 4,530 in 1981, during the height of the oil boom. The industry posted a record low of 488 in 1999.