

# Oklahoma Orders Producers To Cut Wastewater Injection By 40 percent

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Oklahoma state regulators on Tuesday issued a directive to operators of 245 injection wells to reduce wastewater injection volumes by 40% (~500,000 barrels) in a 5,200-square-mile area of western and central Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) called its plan "the largest volume reduction plan" to date.

The move comes three days after Oklahoma recorded the third-largest earthquake in its history. Environmentalists have charged that the increase in seismic activity in the state over the last two years is related to hydraulic fracturing- specifically concerning companies' well disposal activity.

The plan announced Tuesday involves 5,281 square miles, and 245 disposal wells injecting into the Arbuckle formation, the state's deepest geological formation, according to a OCC media advisory. The OCC said there will be four stages of volume reductions between now and April. The body also noted that researchers cautioned against sudden pressure changes in the region.

OCC Oil and Gas Conservation Division director Tim Baker explained the rationale for the decision, which has been in the works in recent months. "We have taken a number of actions in the Medford, Fairview, and Cherokee areas...However, there is agreement among researchers, including our partners at the Oklahoma Geological Survey, that the data clearly underscored the need for a larger, regional response. That is why, even as we took actions in various parts of the region in response to specific earthquake events, we were already working on a larger plan."

"The wells covered in this plan include those along the western area of the plan's boundaries where there has not yet been major earthquake activity," Baker said. "This plan is aimed not only at taking further action in response to past activity, but also to get out ahead of it and hopefully prevent new areas from being involved," Baker continued.

In January, regulators ordered companies within 10 miles of the earthquake's epicenter to reduce their well disposal activity. Later in January, two lawsuits were filed accusing more than a dozen oil and gas companies of causing recent seismic activity through the disposal of their drilling waste in deep wells.