

US rig count falls by 9

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HOUSTON -- The number of rigs actively exploring for oil and natural gas in the U.S. decreased by nine this week to 1,482.

Houston-based Baker Hughes Inc. said Friday that 956 rigs were exploring for natural gas and 514 for oil. Twelve were listed as miscellaneous. A year ago this week, the rig count stood at 955.

Of the major oil- and gas-producing states, North Dakota and Pennsylvania each gained two rigs and California, New Mexico and Oklahoma each gained one. Louisiana lost nine rigs, Texas lost four and Alaska lost one. Arkansas, Colorado, West Virginia and Wyoming were unchanged.

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