



# One Application, One Review, One Decision: A Single-Window Approach to Energy Development

## What is the Alberta Energy Regulator?

The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) is the sole provincial regulator of oil, natural gas, oil sands, and coal development in Alberta. Built on more than 76 years of history, the AER provides for the safe, efficient, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of energy resources. This includes allocating and conserving water, managing public lands, and protecting the environment while securing the economic benefits of energy development for all Albertans.

Since forming in 2013, the AER has undergone significant change, reducing duplication, improving stakeholder relations, and developing a more integrated approach to energy development. And while improvements have been made, we know there is more we can do.

Each year, the AER receives more than 40 000 applications, which can include everything from a request to access a parcel of land, to a request for approval to drill a well, to a request for water use. Each application we receive is currently handled individually, even though many applications are for the same project or development. This system requires that people who

may be interested or affected review every application to try to understand how they all fit together in one project. This isn't easy or efficient.

We are making improvements.

Starting with a few pilot projects to test our approach, we are changing the way operators submit those many applications. Instead of many separate items, operators will submit them as one, single application.

## What does that mean?

### Single Application

It means we'll accept a single application for multiple activities that would traditionally be applied for individually. Single applications will

- include all elements that will be needed to complete an energy development—from start to finish, including all construction plans and details about how the development will operate and how the operator plans to eventually close down the development and reclaim the land; and
- be for a broad range of activities, from a single well to a pipeline, a facility, or a larger, more complex project.

The AER already posts public notices on aer.ca for every application it receives, and the single application will be no different. What is different is that Albertans will be able to see the entire application at once, looking at all the different elements as a project rather than reviewing them one at a time over many months or years. This process will let you know, up front, all the activities being applied for including such things as any water use, number of wells, well pads, roads, the impact of the project on the landscape and how reclamation and remediation may occur.

You will still have an opportunity to have your say about these developments, including the ability to file a statement of concern with the AER. In fact, with all of the information available through this process, it will be easier to identify concerns associated with a particular project. We expect industry to continue to engage with Albertans so concerns are addressed before the single application is submitted. Industry will be expected to engage with people and groups that may be affected by the proposed project throughout the life of the project.

## Single Review

Once we receive the single application, our technical experts will review the application with the same rigor we use for all energy applications. We will examine any risks associated with the project. We will look at the kind of activity and where it is located, and we'll examine the operator's history before making any decisions. We will also examine how the operator has engaged with the community, landowners, and First Nations or Metis affected by the proposed development and

review any Statements of Concern filed in response to the application.

## Single Decision

Once we have completed our review, we will make a single decision.

If the application meets all AER requirements, we can issue an approval for the project to proceed. The approval gives the operator the authority to do all the work it has applied for, such as drilling wells, accessing roads, building pipelines, etc. And our work doesn't stop once an approval is granted. Once the project is underway, the AER will continue to monitor the project at every stage, including when construction starts, when the project is operating, and when the project is ready to close.

But not all applications are approved. In some cases, we place conditions on the approval that an operator must meet. We may monitor the continued engagement with stakeholders and First Nations that is required of an operator as a project progresses through various stages.

If the single application does not meet our requirements, it may be rejected or sent back for more work. Also, the AER may hold a hearing on an application, if required.

## Why are you doing this now?

When the AER was created in 2013, the intent was to improve Alberta's competitiveness by building a modern, efficient, performance-based system that

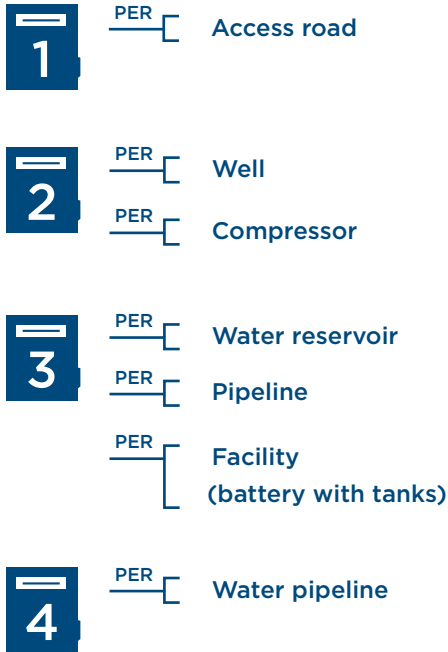


## Where can I get more information?

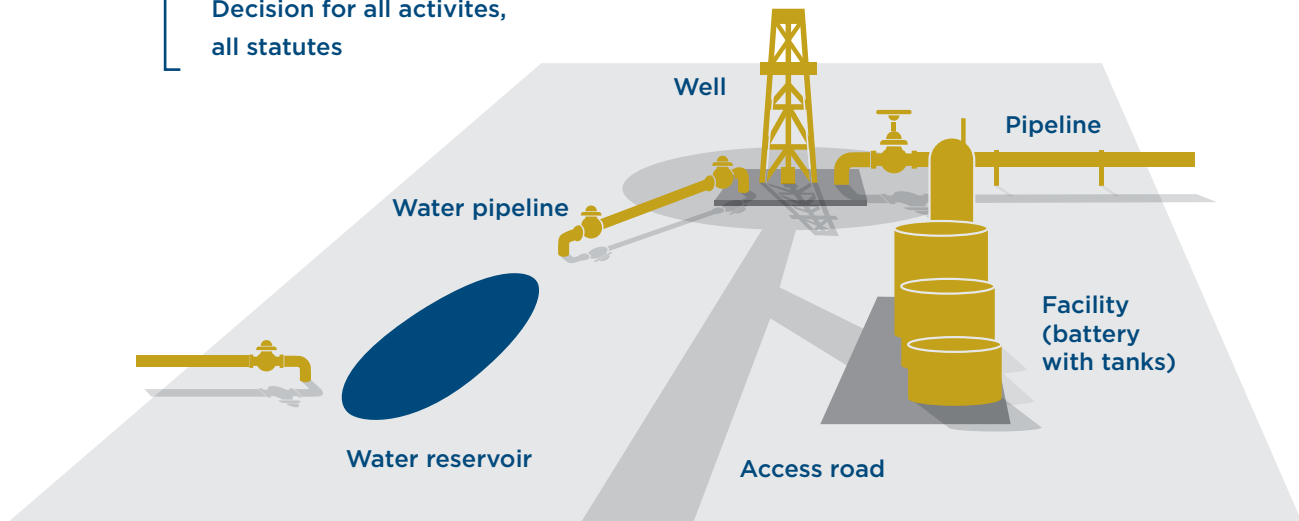
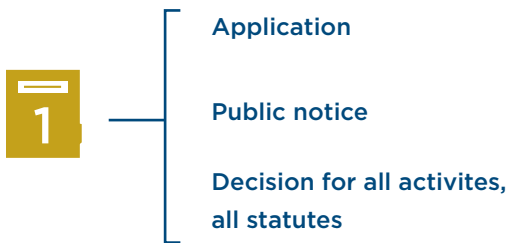
If your community is part of our pilot and you want more information or want to provide feedback, please call our Customer Contact Centre at 1-855-297-7336 or send comments to [NALA@aer.ca](mailto:NALA@aer.ca).

An example of what a single application may include

Current State Applications



Future state: single integrated application



maintains the province’s commitment to environmental management, public safety and responsible resource development.

As the single regulator for Alberta’s energy development activities, the AER was expected to build a risk-based system that looked at the entire lifecycle of an energy development. The goal was to provide operators and stakeholders with a one-application, one-review, one-decision system. This isn’t about cutting corners. It’s about looking at energy developments from a broader perspective—from beginning to end—and making decisions about energy projects with all of the information up front. It helps you understand the connection between activities being proposed in your community.

Today, operators might have to submit 10-30 applications for a single well development. This also means that those interested or potentially affected would look at 10-30 applications. Reducing that number to one comprehensive application will give you a better idea about what is proposed in your community.

What happens next?

As with any new approach to regulation, we have to test it and find any improvements that need to be made. In the coming weeks and months, we will test this new approach in pilot projects in different areas of the province. The results of these pilots will help us refine and improve the approach before implementing it more broadly across the province.

## Connect With Us

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## The Alberta Energy Regulator

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### Our Responsibilities

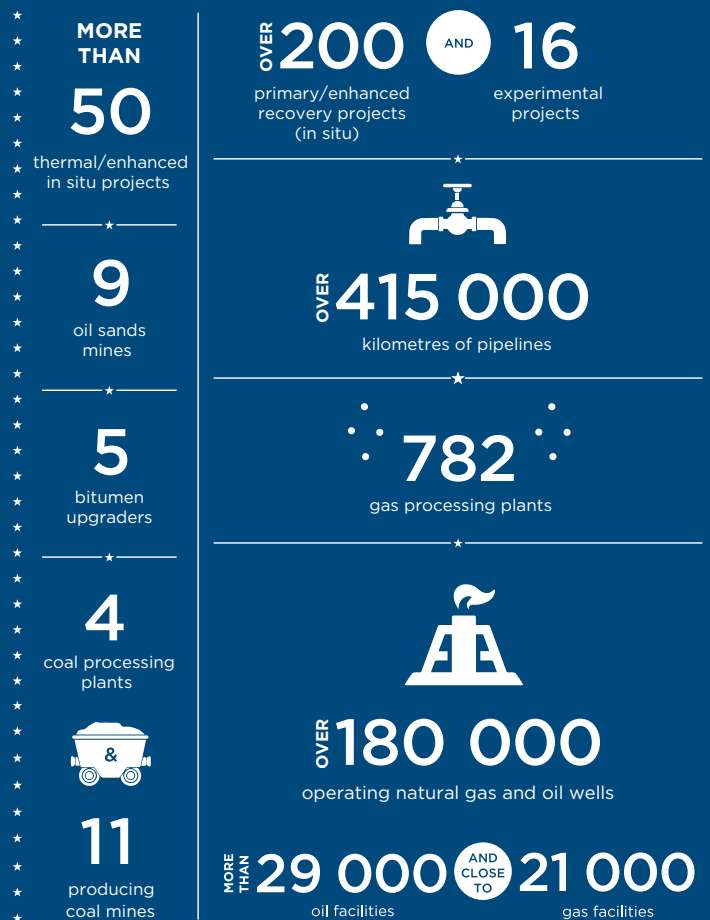
With established reserves of 1.69 billion barrels of bitumen and crude oil, 33.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 37 billion tons of coal, we regulate some of the world's largest hydrocarbon resources.

To ensure that hydrocarbon development in Alberta is done safely and environmentally responsibly, and is closely managed, the Government of Alberta has granted the AER authority to

- review and make decisions on proposed energy developments,
- oversee all aspects of energy resource activities in accordance with government policies,
- regularly inspect energy activities to ensure that all requirements are met,
- penalize companies that fail to comply with AER requirements, and
- hold hearings on proposed energy developments.

Supporting all of this work are more than 1200 technical staff, scientists, inspectors, investigators, stakeholder engagement staff, lawyers, regulatory experts, and other employees working from 15 locations stretching from Medicine Hat in the south to High Level in the north.

### The AER Regulates:



May 1, 2014

Original graphic provided by Oilweek Magazine