



Underground formations are mapped by recording seismic waves as they reflect off various subsurface strata

Drilling a petroleum exploration well

Activity: Exploration drilling for oil and gas can be approximately four kilometres deep, into layers of rock. If the exploration program finds a petroleum resource, testing is needed to determine the quality and amount of oil and/or gas in the well. Test results will help the company decide whether the discovery has any commercial potential.

Impacts: A drilling site covers an area about the size of a football oval and can take several months to drill. Petroleum wells are designed and constructed according to strict safety, engineering and environmental standards, which are checked by DMP. When drilling is finished, the well is made safe and the area rehabilitated. If the well is to be used later a two metre high well-head structure known as a 'Christmas tree' will be erected to allow for controlled production.



Vibroseis trucks. Photo: ARC Energy

Discovery of petroleum

When a discovery is made, the petroleum company needs to establish how best to develop the resource. The company is required to make a 'declaration of location' to DMP before applying for a production license. Further exploration is permitted in the permit area. The production licence application requires comprehensive assessment before commercial operations can be approved.

Rehabilitation

Most land disturbed by petroleum operations is rehabilitated once exploration work is finished. The structures are removed and the land is replanted with native vegetation. The only exceptions are drill sites which might be used in future production. These are kept and maintained until production starts.

More information

Check out other information sheets in this series by visiting the DMP Native Title and Land Access (NTALA) website

www.dmp.wa.gov.au/NTALA

or

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