

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-6-23

§22-6-23. Plugging, abandonment and reclamation of well; notice of intention; bonds; affidavit showing time and manner.

All dry or abandoned wells or wells presumed to be abandoned under the provisions of section nineteen of this article shall be plugged and reclaimed in accordance with this section and the other provisions of this article and in accordance with the rules promulgated by the secretary.

Prior to the commencement of plugging operations and the abandonment of any well, the well operator shall either: (a) Notify, by registered or certified mail, the secretary and the coal operator operating coal seams, the coal seam owner of record or lessee of record, if any, to whom notices are required to be given by section twelve of this article, and the coal operators to whom notices are required to be given by section thirteen of this article, of its intention to plug and abandon any such well (using such form of notice as the secretary may provide), giving the number of the well and its location and fixing the time at which the work of plugging and filling will be commenced, which time shall be not less than five days after the day on which such notice so mailed is received or in due course should be received by the secretary, in order that a representative or representatives of the secretary and such coal operator, owner or lessee, if any, may be present at the plugging and filling of the well: Provided, That whether such representatives appear or do not appear, the well operator may proceed at the time fixed to plug and fill the well in the manner hereinafter described; or (b) first obtain the written approval of the secretary and such coal operator, owner or lessee, if any; or (c) in the event the well to be plugged and abandoned is one on which drilling or reworking operations have been continuously progressing pursuant to authorization granted by the secretary, first obtain the verbal permission of the secretary or the secretary's designated representative to plug and abandon the well, except that the well operator shall, within a reasonable period not to exceed five days after the commencement of the plugging operations, give the written notices required by subdivision (a) above.

The well operator shall not be required to prepare or submit to the director a plat prior to the commencement of plugging operations as long as a plat pertaining to the particular well is on file with the director and accurately identifies the location of the well, or so long as there is also on file with the director the coordinates of the well established by a global positioning system. The coordinates established by a global positioning system must be filed with the secretary in either a written or electronic form prescribed by the secretary. The global positioning system used to establish the coordinates shall be accurate within the variance allowed by law for the distance between the actual location of the well and location shown on the plat that is required to be filed with a well permit application, or the secretary may establish the accuracy of the global positioning system by legislative rule promulgated pursuant to section two of this article.

No well may be plugged or abandoned unless prior to the commencement of plugging

operations and the abandonment of any well the secretary is furnished a bond as provided in section twenty-six of this article. In no event prior to the commencement of plugging operations shall a lessee under a lease covering a well be required to give or sell the well to any person owning an interest in the well, including, but not limited to, the respective lessor, or agent of the lessor, nor may the lessee be required to grant a person with an interest in the well, including, but not limited to, the respective lessor, or agent of the lessor, an opportunity to qualify under section twenty-six of this article to continue operation of the well.

When the plugging, filling and reclamation of a well have been completed, an affidavit, in triplicate, shall be made (on a form to be furnished by the secretary) by two experienced persons who participated in the work, the secretary or the secretary's designated representative, in which affidavit shall be set forth the time and manner in which the well was plugged and filled and the land reclaimed. One copy of this affidavit shall be retained by the well operator, another (or true copies of same) shall be mailed to the coal operator or operators, if any, and the third to the secretary.