

BRINE DISPOSAL WELLS

WHERE DO THEY FIT IN THE UIC REGULATIONS?

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INTRODUCTION

Brine disposal wells have been in operation for years in association with the oil and gas industry. Millions of barrels of produced brine from oil and gas fields are either reinjected into the producing formation or disposed down commercial salt water disposal wells annually. Brine produced, from the solution of bedded salt and salt domes for cavern storage of petroleum, hydrocarbon liquids and natural gas, has likewise been disposed utilizing brine disposal wells. Solution mining of potash deposits also typically involve the disposal of excess or waste brine into injection wells and finally, the production of brine for magnesium, bromine, and iodine also use injection wells for reinjection of the spent brines.

All of these processes involve brine and all the processes involve injection wells but in the context of the Federal UIC Program every one of these operations requires a different type of injection well permit and is subject to a different set of standards. This paper examines the differences and shows why these wells are subject to different regulations. It also examines some of the different approaches utilized by various state programs in dealing with waste disposal wells.

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