

OIL SANDS

Regulations



our challenge

Like all complex industrial operations, oil sands facilities have an impact on the environment. The challenge for regulators is managing the impacts of a specific facility and cumulatively across the region that allows for the resource to be extracted in the safest, most efficient manner.

our actions *

The oil sands industry operates under multi-faceted regulatory oversight – all aspects of facility construction, operations and eventual decommission and reclamation require approvals from various regulatory agencies. In fact, oil sands operators face some of the most stringent regulations on industry anywhere in the world.

fast facts

- > Oil sands facilities are regulated by the Alberta government's departments of environment and sustainable resource development, along with Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB); and federally by Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.
- > Alberta Environment regulates industry by setting appropriate thresholds to minimize the impact of resource development on climate change, air, land and water.
- > The ERCB regulates the safe, responsible, and efficient development of Alberta's energy resources.
 - The ERCB is one of the world's oldest and most respected regulatory agencies for energy development – countries around the world have used the ERCB as a model in designing their own regulatory systems.



REGULATORS MONITOR RECLAMATION EFFORTS AT SUNCOR'S POND 1 (MAY 2009). TODAY, IT IS THE FIRST TAILINGS POND TO COMPLETE SURFACE RECLAMATION.

approvals to operate

- > All oil sands operators are required to obtain approval from Alberta Environment before a shovel hits the dirt.
 - These approvals lay out rules for all aspects of operation – including water use, tailings management, air emissions, reclamation activities, monitoring requirements, and reporting requirements.
- > Legislation requires companies to report all releases of substances that could cause an adverse environmental effect.
- > Approvals require mandatory renewal every 10 years to allow new information, technologies and best practices to be incorporated.
- > The Energy Resources Conservation Board's Directive 074 requires annual mine and tailings plans to assist in its evaluation of operations.

enforcement tools

- > Proactive action, such as prevention and education, is taken to ensure companies are following the conditions of their approval and complying with environmental laws.
- > Inspectors conduct scheduled and unannounced inspections, as well as compliance sweeps.
- > Should an operator break a condition in an approval, a variety of enforcement tools are available depending on the severity of the offense; including prosecution, suspension of operating licence or approval cancellation.



OPERATORS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING DATA TO REGULATORS.

steps to development

1

Operators Apply:

- > File application for development with the provincial Energy Resources Conservation Board and federal Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
- > Consult with Aboriginal people and other directly affected stakeholders

2

Regulators Decide:

- > Review the application; could include an environmental impact assessment
- > Issue public notice; accept statements of concern
- > Hold quasi-judicial public hearing if objections are received
- > Decides in the public interest whether the project will proceed

3

Conditions are Set:

- > Operator applies for an approval to operate
- > Public notice is issued, statements of concern reviewed
- > Aspects of construction, operations and closure are set
- > Construction begins

reporting and monitoring

- > As a condition of an approval, facilities must submit verified monitoring data directly to government.
- > Any reports submitted to regulators under an approval are available through routine disclosure. Approval documents are available online.
- > Industry funds and participates in multi-stakeholder monitoring programs such as the Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program and the Wood Buffalo Environmental Association.