



PRESS RELEASES

from the RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

Barry T. Smitherman, Chairman ★ David Porter, Commissioner ★ Christi Craddick, Commissioner

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Railroad Commission Hires Seismologist

AUSTIN—Railroad Commission Executive Director Milton Rister announced today the Commission has hired a seismologist, Dr. David Craig Pearson, a former team leader for a Los Alamos National Laboratory seismic, experimental field team, who also holds a doctorate in geophysics from Southern Methodist University.

“My objective is to develop a broad understanding of the impact of oil and gas extraction activities on the day-to-day lives of Texas residents,” Pearson said. “I believe the Railroad Commission must be able to quickly and factually determine the accurate location of all earthquakes in the state and be able to determine the cause of earthquakes, be they natural or man-made.

“I plan to work to help clarify the root cause of earthquakes occurring by bringing all stakeholders’ concerns, questions, ideas and insights together to identify the best possible solutions,” Pearson said.

Chairman Barry Smitherman said, “I look forward to Dr. Pearson’s assistance in helping our agency become proactive in determining the exact cause of seismic events in Texas as very few and relatively minor seismic events have been documented over the past several decades compared to more than 144,000 disposal wells operating nationwide.”

Commissioner David Porter said, “After an extensive, nationwide search, I’m happy to announce that the Railroad Commission has added a highly qualified seismologist to our staff. This will allow our agency to further examine any possible correlation between seismic events and oil and gas activity and gain a more thorough understanding of the science and data available. Having a seismologist on staff will also enable the Commission to better coordinate with the academic community on future research.”

Commissioner Christi Craddick said, “The Commission has a long history of safely regulating disposal wells, with the Commission issuing its first disposal permit in 1936. With more than 34,000 of these wells currently operating in Texas, it is important that sound science be our guide in determining if there are any links to seismic activity. I welcome Dr. Pearson’s expertise to help us work on these issues.”

Rister said Pearson will start effective April 1. His bio can be found at:
www.rrc.state.tx.us/pressreleases/2014/Seismologist_Resume.pdf

At SMU, while a PhD graduate student, Pearson was a graduate research assistant to Dr. Brian Stump, an SMU professor who is a member of the SMU earthquake team currently studying north Texas seismicity. Pearson has experience with many types of man-made earthquakes from nuclear explosions, coal mining blasts and controlled seismic sources for exploration geophysics. And he also has participated as an author on numerous academic papers on these subjects. Pearson is a member of the Seismological Society of America, American Geophysical Union and American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

In his former position as a ranch manager in McCamey, Pearson has been a strong advocate of protecting and conserving Texas groundwater and surface water, and he currently serves as vice president of the Upton County Water District.

As the Commission's in-house seismologist, Pearson will allow the Commission to strengthen its ability to follow new research, as well as coordinate an exchange of factual, scientific information with the research community.

Pearson's duties will include coordinating with other academic experts studying seismic events in Texas; obtaining, studying and interpreting various forms of data to evaluate seismic activity associated with known faults and historic and/or ongoing oil and gas exploration and production activities; leading efforts to conduct research as well as internally integrate oil and gas science with seismic science; coordinating communications and information gathering with stakeholders; reviewing, analyzing, interpreting and commenting on technical data from seismic data sources, computer models and digital maps; and developing recommendations and action plans.

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About the Railroad Commission

Established in 1891, the Railroad Commission of Texas is the oldest regulatory agency in the state. The Commission has a long and proud history of service to both Texas and to the nation, including more than 90 years regulating the oil and gas industry. Additionally, the Commission promotes research and education on the use of alternative fuels and has jurisdiction over gas utility, surface mining and pipeline industries. Our mission is to serve Texas by our stewardship of natural resources and the environment, our concern for personal and community safety, and our support of enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texans. To learn more, please visit <http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/>.