



TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

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October 16, 2015

Public Comments Processing
Attn: Docket ID Number EPA-HQ-OAR-2010-0505
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards
Research Triangle Park, NC 27711

Re: Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists comments on Oil and Natural Gas Sector: Emission Standards for New and Modified Sources (Docket ID Number EPA-HQ-OAR-2010-0505).

To whom it may concern:

The Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists (TBPG) was created in 2001 to regulate the public practice of geoscience in Texas. Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1002 (the Act) provides for the requirement of licensure to offer or engage in the non-exempt public practice of geoscience in Texas. Section 1002.251 of the Act, states, "LICENSE REQUIRED (a) Unless exempted by this chapter, a person may not engage in the public practice of geoscience unless the person holds a license issued under this chapter." Section 1002.251 of the Act, also states, "(c) A person may not take responsible charge of a geoscientific report of a geoscientific portion of a report required by municipal or county ordinance, state or federal law, state agency rule, or federal regulation that incorporates or is based on a geoscientific study or geoscientific data unless the person is licensed under this chapter."

The Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists licenses approximately 4,400 Professional Geoscientists. The requirements of licensure include: (1) be of good moral and ethical character as attested to by letters of reference submitted in behalf of the applicant, (2) have graduated from a course of study in a discipline of geoscience that consists of at least four years of study and includes at least 30 semester hours of credit in geoscience or satisfactorily completed other equivalent requirements, (3) have a documented record of at least five years of qualifying work experience that demonstrates that the person is qualified to assume responsible charge of geoscientific work, (4) pass an examination required by the board covering the fundamentals and practice of the appropriate discipline of geoscience, and (5) meet any other requirements established by the board.

The mission of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists is to protect public health, safety, welfare and the state's natural resources by ensuring only qualified persons carry out the public practice of geoscience and enforcing the Code of Professional Conduct the Board has established for its licensees.


Texas-licensed Professional Geoscientists provide services in the areas of environmental geology, hydrogeology, engineering geology, and other areas that must be performed competently and ethically to protect the public health, safety, welfare, and natural resources. Failure to perform these services competently and ethically can result in disciplinary action by the board up to and including revocation of licensure.


Comment:

In the September 18, 2015, proposed rule titled Oil and Natural Gas Sector: Emission Standards for New and Modified Sources, the EPA describes a number of options for ensuring fugitive emission verification. In section IX Implementation Improvements, part (B) Fugitive Emissions Verification, the EPA describes possibly allowing parties responsible for performing leak surveys to have a professional accreditation such as that provided by ANSI, ASTM, ISO or NIST. The TBPG would request that persons with Professional Geoscientist licensure be recognized as equal to a licensed Professional Engineer.

Specifically, Professional Geoscientists are licensed to ensure protection of human health and the environment and are subject to a licensure program. Professional Geoscientists' work products routinely include soil, water and vapor migration assessments and vapor monitoring for spills and releases. Licensed Professional Geoscientists have extensive experience that should be considered as an appropriate accreditation for the EPA's proposed rules.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.


C. Thomas Hallmark, Ph.D., P.G., Chairman


W. David Prescott, II, P.G., Vice Chairman


Becky Johnson, P.G., Secretary-Treasurer