

Microhole technology produces new tools

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The U.S. Department of Energy says new technology being developed for its 2-year-old Microhole Initiative is yielding new tools.

Some of the tools, designed to drill ultra small-diameter natural gas and oil wells, have been field-tested and are awaiting a final decision this year for full-scale commercialization. Other microhole projects are wrapping up and will soon move into the field-test stage.

Microhole drilling uses coiled tubing to drill wells with diameters of less than 4 1/2 inches or equally small-diameter boreholes from existing wells. Engineers said the technique leaves a much smaller footprint in environmentally sensitive areas and produces much less drilling waste compared with the more cumbersome conventional rigs that deploy standard-size drill pipe to drill larger-diameter holes.

Department scientists said microhole technology, by virtue of its ability to dramatically reduce drilling costs, risks, and environmental impacts, could change the way America's oil and natural gas wells are drilled.

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