

2nd company shuts oil, gas wells after fatal Colorado blast

April 29 2017, by Dan Elliott

A second petroleum company said it would shut down and inspect wells after a fatal house explosion near a gas well in Colorado, although investigators have not said whether the well was the cause.

Great Western Oil & Gas Co. said it would check 61 of its wells and hoped all would be shut down by Thursday. It did not say where the wells were, and a [company](#) spokesman did not immediately return a call Friday seeking comment.

It comes after Anadarko Petroleum announced Wednesday that it was shutting down and inspecting 3,000 wells after the April 17 explosion in the town of Firestone, which killed two people and badly burned a third. Anadarko owns a gas well within 200 feet (60 meters) of the house.

Fire officials said they had not determined the cause of the explosion, but the well was part of the investigation.

State regulators said they had not found evidence of leaks from the well but were still running tests. They said they did not believe nearby homes were in immediate danger.

The well was drilled in 1993. State records show it was shut down all of last year and resumed production in January, although the records do not show the reasons. Anadarko spokesman John Christiansen declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

The well was last inspected in 2014 and received a "satisfactory" rating.

The nearby houses, including the one that exploded, were built after the well was drilled.

All the other wells Anadarko is shutting down are about the same age as the one in Firestone. Like the Firestone well, they were drilled vertically instead of using later technology that allows wells to be drilled first vertically and then horizontally to reach distant oil and gas formations.

Anadarko's action prompted Boulder County, just west of Firestone, to issue a public statement Thursday asking energy companies to shut down and inspect all vertical wells there, about 300 total.

"We really appreciate the fact that they (Anadarko) are trying to be cautious," Michelle Krezek, a deputy to the county commissioners, said Friday. "For us, if there's a potential for a hazard, then we should be shutting down all those types of wells, not just Anadarko's."

She said the county has no authority to require operators to shut down their wells and had not directly spoken to any of the nine companies active there.

Adams County, which is just south of Firestone, also asked oil and gas companies to inspect vertical wells near occupied buildings, citing Anadarko and Great Western as examples. The county did not call for any wells to be shut down.

The counties and Firestone are in the vast Denver-Julesburg Basin, a rich oil and gas field that spreads across much of northeastern Colorado. The proximity of growing cities, drilling rigs and [wells](#) is a source of tension.

The Colorado Oil and Gas Association tried to reassure residents Friday

that they were safe while investigators looked for the cause of the explosion.

"Extraordinary measures are taking place to confirm that our communities are safe," association President Dan Haley said in a statement.

Haley urged elected officials to be cautious about making policy decisions until the investigation is complete.

"We understand some communities are rightly concerned and want to protect their citizens," he said. "The oil and gas industry and all of our operators share that desire to protect residents, as the safety of our neighbors, friends and workers is our top value."

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