

Regulatory Citation(s):

78.92. Wells in coal areas – surface or coal protective casing is cemented.

(a) In a well underlain by a workable coal seam, where the surface casing or coal protective casing is cemented and the production casing is not cemented or the production casing is not present, the owner or operator shall plug the well as follows:

- (1) The retrievable production casing shall be removed by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.

(b) The owner or operator shall plug the well, where the surface casing, coal protective casing and production casing are cemented, as follows:

- (3) Following the plugging of the cemented portion of the production casing, the uncemented portion of the production casing shall be separated from the cemented portion and retrieved by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.

78.93. Wells in coal areas – surface or coal protective casing anchored with a packer or cement.

(a) In a well where the surface casing or coal protective casing and production casing are anchored with a packer or cement, the owner or operator shall plug the well as follows:

- (1) The retrievable production casing shall be removed by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.
- (3) After it has been established that the surface casing or coal protective casing is free and can be retrieved, the surface or coal protective casing shall be retrieved by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.

78.94. Wells in noncoal areas – surface casing is not cemented or not present.

(a) The owner or operator shall plug a noncoal well, where the surface casing and production casing are not cemented, or is not present as follows:

- (1) The retrievable production casing shall be removed by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.
- (3) After setting the uppermost 50-foot plug, the retrievable surface casing shall be removed by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.

78.95. Wells in noncoal areas – surface casing is cemented.

(a) The owner or operator shall plug a well, where the surface casing is cemented and the production casing is not cemented or not present, as follows:

- (1) The retrievable production casing shall be removed by applying a pulling force at least equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% whichever is greater. If this fails, an attempt shall be made to separate the casing by cutting, ripping, shooting or other method approved by the Department, and making a second attempt to remove the casing by exerting a pulling force equal to the casing weight plus 5,000 pounds or 120% of the casing weight, whichever is greater.

Question:

Is the “manual backoff” method considered acceptable before attempting to pull the casing a second time?

Response:

The inspector’s or other Regional Office staff’s discretion should be applied as to whether or not the “manual backoff method” constitutes another “Department approved method” on a case-by-case basis.