

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS  
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL  
HEARINGS SECTION**

**OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 02-0250790**

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**ENFORCEMENT ACTION FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY BURTON, V.C. OIL & GAS, INC. (112360), AS TO THE MEYERS GAS UNIT LEASE, WELL NO. 1 (187537), HOPE (MIOCENE 2950) FIELD, LAVACA COUNTY, TEXAS**

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**FINAL ORDER**

The Commission finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by the examiner on July 19, 2007, and that the respondent, Burton, V.C. Oil & Gas, Inc. (112360), failed to appear or respond to the notice. Pursuant to § 1.49 of the Commission's General Rules of Practice and Procedure [Tex. R. R. Comm'n, 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 1.49] and after being duly submitted to the Railroad Commission of Texas at conference held in its offices in Austin, Texas, the Commission makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Burton, V.C. Oil & Gas, Inc. (112360), ("Respondent") was given Notice of Opportunity for Hearing by certified mail, addressed to the most recent P-5 address on the Form P-5 Organization Report, which was returned to the Commission marked "return to sender, attempted not known."
2. The returned certified receipt containing the Original Complaint and the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing mailed to Respondent's most recent P-5 address was returned to the Commission marked "return to sender, attempted not known" on May 25, 2007. The certified receipt has been on file with the Commission for 15 days, exclusive of the day of receipt and day of issuance.
3. On June 13, 2006, Respondent, a Corporation, filed an Organization Report (Form P-5) reporting that its officers consisted of the following individual(s): Virgil C. Burton, President; and Sandra G. Burton, Secretary.
4. Virgil C. Burton, was a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent, as defined by Texas Natural Resources Code Section 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by respondent.
5. Sandra G. Burton, was a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent, as defined by Texas Natural Resources Code Section 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by respondent.

6. The violations of Commission rules committed by respondent are related to safety and the control of pollution.
7. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of Well No. 1(187537) on the Meyers Gas Unit Lease (“subject well”/“subject lease”) by filing a Form P-4 (Producers Transportation of Authority and Certificate of Compliance ) with the Commission effective on November 1, 2003.
8. According to Commission records the Respondent’s Form P-5 (Organization Report) is active. Respondent has a \$25,000.00 Bond as its financial assurance.
9. The subject well ceased production on or before August 2004.
10. The W-1X plugging extension for Well No. 1 (187537) on the Meyers Gas Unit Lease was denied on May 31, 2006, for violation of Rule 8.
11. Usable quality groundwater in the area could have been contaminated by migrations or discharges of saltwater and other oil and gas wastes from the subject well. Unplugged wellbores constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the probability of pollution.
12. The estimated cost to the State for plugging the subject well is \$6,900.00.
13. According to Commission records, drilling operations on Well No. 1 (187537) on the Meyers Gas Unit Lease were completed in June 2001. Commission District inspection reports made on September 14, 2006, November 14, 2006, December 6, 2006 and January 9, 2007 for the Meyers Gas Unit Lease indicated that two drilling pits measuring approximately 25' x 30' x 8' and 15' x 45' x 6' remained open and had not been backfilled.
14. Unfilled pits constitute a hazard to public health and safety because of the potential for illegal dumping in the pits and the potential for surface run-off to collect in the pit and seep into subsurface waters.
15. The Respondent has not demonstrated good faith since it failed to plug or otherwise place the subject lease and subject well in compliance after being notified of the violations by the District Office and failed to appear at the hearing to explain its inaction.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. Proper notice was issued by the Railroad Commission to respondent and to all other appropriate persons legally entitled to notice.
2. All things necessary to the Commission attaining jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties in this hearing have been performed or have occurred.
3. Respondent is in violation of Commission Statewide Rules 8(d)(4)(G)(i)(I) and 14(b)(2).

4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 8(d)(4)(G)(i)(I), which requires reserve pits and mud circulation pits to be dewatered, backfilled and compacted within one year of cessation of drilling operations.
5. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease and well in compliance with all applicable Commission rules according to Statewide Rules 14, 58, and 79 and Chapters 89 and 91 of the Texas Natural Resources Code.
6. The documented violations committed by the respondent constitute acts deemed serious, a hazard to the public health, and demonstrate a lack of good faith pursuant to TEX. NAT. RES. CODE ANN. §81.0531(c).
7. As a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent at the time respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution, Virgil C. Burton, and any other organization in which he may hold a position of ownership or control, shall be subject to the restrictions of Texas Natural Resource Code Section 91.114(a)(2) for a period of no more than seven years from the date the order entered in this matter becomes final, or until the conditions that constituted the violations herein are corrected or are being corrected in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed; and all administrative, civil, and criminal penalties and all cleanup and plugging costs incurred by the State relating to those conditions are paid or are being paid in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed, whichever is earlier.
8. As a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent at the time respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution, Sandra G. Burton, and any other organization in which she may hold a position of ownership or control, shall be subject to the restrictions of Texas Natural Resource Code Section 91.114(a)(2) for a period of no more than seven years from the date the order entered in this matter becomes final, or until the conditions that constituted the violations herein are corrected or are being corrected in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed; and all administrative, civil, and criminal penalties and all cleanup and plugging costs incurred by the State relating to those conditions are paid or are being paid in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed, whichever is earlier.

**IT IS ORDERED THAT** within 30 days from the day immediately following the date this order becomes final:

1. Burton, V.C. Oil & Gas, Inc. (112360), shall plug or otherwise place the Meyers Gas Unit Lease, Well No. 1 (187537), Hope (Miocene 2950) Field, Lavaca County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations; and
2. Burton, V.C. Oil & Gas, Inc. (112360), shall place the Meyers Gas Unit Lease, Hope (Miocene 2950) Field, Lavaca County, Texas in compliance with Statewide Rule 8.
3. Burton, V.C. Oil & Gas, Inc. (112360), shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$4,000.00)**.

It is further **ORDERED** by the Commission that this order shall not be final and effective until 20 days after a party is notified of the Commission's order. A party is presumed to have been notified of the Commission's order three days after the date on which the notice is actually mailed. If a timely motion for rehearing is filed by any party at interest, this order shall not become final and effective until such motion is overruled, or if such motion is granted, this order shall be subject to further action by the Commission. Pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.146(e), the time allotted for Commission action on a motion for rehearing in this case prior to its being overruled by operation of law, is hereby extended until 90 days from the date the parties are notified of the order.

All requested findings of fact and conclusions of law which are not expressly adopted herein are denied. All pending motions and requests for relief not previously granted or granted herein are denied.

Noncompliance with the provisions of this order is subject to enforcement by the Attorney General and subject to civil penalties of up to \$10,000.00 per day per violation.

Done this 9th day of October 2007.

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS**

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order dated October 9, 2007)

JD/sa