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"Simultaneous injection reduces disposal costs and is environmentally safer because the salt water is never brought to the surface where there is a risk of accidental spillage and soil contamination, and production economics are improved because the petroleum does not have to be forced to the surface through standing water at the perforation point," Dr. Bruce Langhus, Corporation Commission underground injection control manager, said.

But commission rules that prescribe environmental safety requirements for subsurface disposal of salt water don't recognize simultaneous disposal as an option, so operators can't realize full economic benefits from the new technology, Langhus said.

For example, he said, an operator who wants to dispose of salt water on-site must meet surface casing requirements for a disposal well although the requirements are unnecessary when the salt water is separated underground.

Langhus said the Corporation Commission is seeking suggestions on how its underground injection rules could be revised to encourage use of the new technology.

"Simultaneous injection promises to cut down on the largest source of oilfield waste while improving the economics of almost every oil and gas well in Oklahoma," Langhus said. He cited several uses of the technology and the economic results.

Langhus said use of the new technology is especially important in Oklahoma where the average oil well produces fewer than three barrels of oil but more than 36 barrels of salt water per day.

Langhus said the Corporation Commission plans to change its underground injection rules. "But right now, we want to collect ideas and suggestions to help make sure that proposed rule changes will be helpful to the oil and gas industry and will continue to protect the environment," he said.

