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Lessons learned in the North Sea: Closing the gaps in permanent well plugging

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All wells will one day need to be permanently plugged and abandoned (P&A'ed), and this last phase of a well's life cycle does not end –but has an eternal perspective. The North Sea is a mature petroleum region, and a heavy focus on P&A activities are planned here for the next decades. Research and technology development needs to keep up with this shift in activity level, and a strong focus has thus recently been put on R&D relevant for P&A in Norway.

This talk will give an overview of P&A challenges and opportunities in the North Sea. First of all, it will point out exactly why today's P&A operations are so time consuming and expensive. Technology gaps will be outlined, together with issues related to standards and regulations in the North Sea countries. Thereafter, emerging P&A solutions will be discussed, and results will be shared from ongoing R&D projects aiming to simplify future P&A operations.

Examples of topics that will be outlined are:

- Making use of shale formations as permanent barriers in wells
- Techniques for simpler removal of steel pipes from wells
- Methods for avoiding steel removal during P&A
- Advice for maximizing long-term integrity of plugged wells

Thoughts about possible value creation from P&A, which is an ever-growing and long-lasting market, will also be shared with the audience. Differences between the North Sea and the Gulf of Mexico when it comes to plugging costs and operations will also be outlined.

References

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