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Editorial: Seismic tests in Beaumont need firm controls

The Beaumont City Council should listen to the advice of City Manager Kyle Hayes and be very careful about any changes to the city's ordinance on seismic testing. The proposed changes would allow testing closer to structures than currently allowed and permit testing on weekends (although not in residential areas).

Some tests may be OK, and the city could benefit financially if any oil or gas is brought to the surface. But the tests can damage homes by cracking walls or foundations, sometimes in ways that aren't apparent for weeks or months, when it may be difficult for homeowners to be compensated. And many residents today don't even own the mineral rights for their property, so they would face the risks without the upside.

Hayes noted that before the current ordinance was amended, seismic tests damaged streets and produced "hundreds and hundreds" of complaints from residents. Clearly, it would be irresponsible for the council to allow something like that to return.