

Paradox Salt Drilling Procedure

Ten distinct shale bodies occur in the Paradox Salt formation. Most notably, shales numbers 4, 5 and 6, and their associated anhydrite, in the sequence of the Paradox Salt are called the "Killer Shales" for their high H₂S content and tendency to stick pipe.

The "Killer Shale" section lies approximately 400'-500' into the Paradox and usually has a 20'-30' salt section between shale number 4 and 5. Because these shales are subject to plastic flow, to prevent sticking, the following procedure has worked in the past and is recommended.

Preparing to drill the Paradox Salt Formation

1. Test the BOPs on the last bit trip prior to drilling the Paradox Salt.
2. Pick up a set of mechanical Daily Oil Tool drilling jars on the last bit trip prior to drilling in to the Paradox.
3. Run a survey to the top of the salt. This will help to avoid shutting down while drilling the sticky shales.
4. Use the salt formation cross-section as an indicator for predicting where each of the shale bodies will be encountered. Shales number 4, 5 and 6 are considered to be the most troublesome.
5. Increase flow rate to an annular velocity of at least 200 ft/min. Limitations of the rig's hydraulic system should be considered when selecting bit nozzle sizes.

Drilling the Paradox Salt Formation

6. The Driller will hand drill the interval beginning at the top of the Paradox Salt and continuing until all problem shales have been penetrated and normal conditions return.
7. Control drill the Paradox while noting the normal torque values for the salts. If there is any fluctuation in pump pressure or torque, pick up off bottom and ream until hole conditions stabilize. Drill a maximum of 5' of salt and 1'-2' of shale before picking up 15'- 20' and reaming to bottom slowly to clean the wellbore. The severity of torque, and increases in pump pressure, should dictate the interval lengths. Some portions of the hole may require drilling only a few inches before picking up and reaming.
8. After 1' to 2' of shale is penetrated, expect 50,000-100,000 lbs drag to free the bit initially. After freeing the bit, pick up 15'-20' and start reaming back to bottom. If the torque increases 20-30 ft-lb above normal, pick up and expect 25,000-50,000 lb drag.
9. On each Kelly down, have the Driller pick up a full Kelly plus one single, then ream back to bottom. Reaming serves two purposes:
 - a. It conditions the walls of the wellbore
 - b. It allows for the cuttings to be carried away from the bit and collars before making a connection.
10. Pipe should be pulled and run slowly to avoid problems in the tight sections of the hole. Torque should dictate the frequency of the short trips. Periodic short trips through the entire salt section have proven useful in reducing high torque due to sticky shale.

At the present time, the key to drilling these sticky shales in the Paradox Salt is **PATIENCE**. It should be noted that good gas shows are also present in these shale stringers, and as the gas out of the sticky shales starts to subside, the hole starts to stabilize.