

PROJECT UPDATE: Construction nearly complete on Sturgeon Refinery

The construction workforce at the Sturgeon Refinery site is on the final push toward completion. Finishing construction is the next big milestone on the way to full operations.

The refinery is made up of ten large units. Eight of the ten are constructed and in various stages of commissioning and start up. Each unit has a team of experienced personnel to ensure the equipment is running properly, procedures are validated, and performance is monitored. Cold weather during the winter months provided key learnings to ensure the refinery is ready for operating efficiently throughout Alberta's four seasons.

The two units still under construction include the LC Finer, which processes some of the heaviest fractions of bitumen, as well as the gasifier, which collects CO₂ produced in the refining process, reducing the carbon footprint of our end product. Remaining work on these two units mainly includes electrical heat tracing, insulation, and scaffolding. Target completion is this spring, at which time commissioning and start up will be the focus.

Diesel production milestone achieved

This past December, the Sturgeon Refinery celebrated the production of first diesel. Final product began shipping through pipeline to Pembina just south of our refinery for distribution to our customers via truck and rail.

At the current stage of construction, the refinery is able to process synthetic crude oil into diesel and other value added products. As part of commissioning and start up, a partially upgraded feedstock such as synthetic crude allows for testing and adjustments in the units that are functioning. Once the refinery is fully operational, it will use bitumen feedstock to complete the entire refining process from start to finish.

Over 50 million hours logged at refinery

Since 2011, over 50 million hours have been worked on the project. For the average person who works a regular 40 hour week for 52 weeks a year, it would take over 24,000 years to work that many hours. At peak construction, over 8,000 workers were on site every day, with that number dropping to approximately 2,500 people per day currently. The majority of those are involved in finishing construction activities. Various positions required for long term operations still need to be hired, though most of the 400+ people are already in place.

With a substantial decrease in workforce numbers, the bussing program came to an end in December. All totalled, the kilometres logged by the busses equal over 350 trips around the earth – that's one per day for nearly a year.

Community investment benefits local museum, schools, and community associations

Nearby communities continue to benefit from the proceeds of NWR's recycling program. Recent charitable donations provided new technology for schools, upgrades for museum, better facilities for rural community association, funds for family programming, and Christmas gifts for children from Alexander First Nation. Details on applying for funding: www.nwrsturgeonrefinery.com.

Photograph captions top to bottom, L to R: Aerial view of the Sturgeon Refinery in winter; Construction nearly complete on the gasifier unit; Community organizations celebrated with NWR at our announcement of first diesel in December at UFA in Morinville; CEO of NW Refining Ian MacGregor provides free diesel to a local fire truck as part of the first diesel celebration; Community investment helps local 4-H clubs, the Redwater and District Museum, Christmas festivities at Alexander First Nation, and many other initiatives in the region.



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