# **Drilling Fluids for Extended-Reach Wells**

Subjects: Engineering, Petroleum

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In the planning phase of extended-reach well (ERW), special attention should be paid to the choice of drilling fluid. Selected drilling fluids for extended-reach wells should satisfy the same basic functions that are common to all drilling fluids, and they have to provide excellent reservoir protection. When drilling extended-reach wells, the following critical factors should be considered: hole cleaning, torque and drag, borehole stability, equivalent circulating density (ECD) and lost circulation. So far, oil-based mud (OBM) and water-based mud (WBM) have also been used in practice, but the emphasis is on the application of environmentally friendly additives.

Keywords: well design ; extended-reach drilling (ERD) ; torque ; drag ; hole cleaning ; barite sag ; ECD ; drilling fluid

## 1. Hole Cleaning

Drilling fluid has many functions, and one of the primary functions is to carry drilled cuttings to the surface. To achieve that goal, it is necessary to remove them quickly and efficiently. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that hole cleaning depends on a number of parameters, such as (1) the hole angle of the interval, (2) flow rate/annular velocity, (3) drilling fluid rheology and density, (4) cutting size, shape, density and integrity, (5) rate of penetration (ROP), (6) drill string rotational rate and (7) drill string eccentricity [1][2][3][4]. It is also important to emphasize that effective hole cleaning does not depend on only one drilling parameter but also on a combination of parameters <sup>[4]</sup>. Bilgesu et al. (2007) divided key factors in drill cuttings transport into three main groups: (a) operational factors, (b) drilling fluid parameters and (3) cuttings parameters. Operational factors include drill pipe rotation, hole inclination, annular eccentricity and the fluid flow rate. The parameters of the drilling fluid refer to its density, rheological parameters and composition. Cutting parameters are their shape, size and type. Only a few of them can be effectively controlled during drilling for hole-cleaning purposes. Poor hole cleaning has led to over 70% lost time in oil and gas drilling operations <sup>[2][5]</sup>.

Unlike vertical wells, in directional, extended-reach wells, there are three cleaning zones that differ from each other according to the hole inclination. These are the I zone  $(0-30^\circ)$ , II zone  $(30-60^\circ)$  and III zone  $(60-90^\circ)$  (**Figure 1**a). As soon as the deviation in the borehole channel exceeds 10°, there is a tendency for cuttings to deposit on the lower walls of that channel. With an increasing inclination, this tendency is more pronounced. However, in practice, the greatest tendency toward the deposition of cuttings was observed in the third zone, at an inclination between 30° and 60° <sup>[6]</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Hole cleaning in extended-reach wells (cleaning zones (**a**), influence of gravity and hole inclination (**b**) and recommendations for improving (**c**)).

During the hole cleaning, the cuttings are affected by positive forces upwards (due to the mud velocity, viscosity and density) and negative forces downwards (due to the action of gravity) (**Figure 1**b).

Cuttings fall or slide through parts of the mud column that do not move (or move slowly) and will fall faster through muds of a lower viscosity than through viscous muds. In order to achieve the satisfactory removal of cuttings from the bottom and bring them to the surface, the annular mud velocity should be slightly higher than the rate of the sliding of the cuttings (cuttings slip velocity, settling velocity) through the mud column toward the bottom of the wellbore. Recommendations for improving the hole cleaning of each zone are presented in **Figure 1**c.

The annular velocity has the greatest influence on cleaning holes from cuttings in almost vertical (Zone I) and moderately **References** is of holes (Zone II), whereas, in extended-reach, high-angle wells (Zone III), it ranks third in importance (**Figure 1**c). Increasing the flow rate or using a drill pipe with a larger outer diameter (OD) results in a higher annular 1. Ozbayoglu, M.E.; Miska, S.Z.; Reed, T.; Takach, N. Analysis of the Effects of Major Drilling Parameters on Cuttings velocity. In practice, a slight improvement in hole cleaning was observed at an annular rate greater than 60.96 m/min (200 rransport Efficiency for High-Angle Wells in Colled Tubing Drilling Operations. In Proceedings of the SPE/ICoTA Colled ff/min), but an increase in the equivalent circulating. density (ECD) occurred <sup>[Z]</sup>. Unfortunately, increasing the annular velocity increases the flow resistances and hence the ECD, so the flow rate must be balanced to achieve satisfactory 2. Ogunrinde J.O.; Dosumur, A. Hydraulic, Ontimization for Efficient Hole. Cleaning in Deviated and Horizontal Wells. In Proceedings of the 2012 SPE Nigerian Annual International Conference and Exhibition, Abuja, Nigeria, 6–8 August

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Lexington, KY, USA, 17–19 October 2007. can significantly improve hole cleaning, particularly when the drill pipe is eccentric, because effective hole cleaning is not for some with the drill with the lane A New Computer Package for Simulating Cuttings Transport and Predicting Hole Cleaning

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(d) cuttings accumulation in the wellbore and thus the circulation time required to clean the wellbore from cuttings 15. Gavignet, A.; Sobey, I.J. Model Aids Cuttings Transport Prediction. J. Pet. Technol. 1989, 41, 916–921. increases as the inclination of the well increases. The thickness of the cuttings bed has a significant effect on the annular 16 resters and the rest of Cuttings Removal by Use of Real-Time Annulus Pressure

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Today's needs for larger amounts of hydrocarbons have forced the industry to increase production and thus to improve 30. Morrison, A.: Serov, N.: Ahmed, F. Completing Ultra Extended-Reach Wells: Overcoming the Torque and Drag the way in which oil and gas reservoirs are exploited. The construction of horizontal wells enables the exploitation of oil Constraints of Brine. In Proceedings of the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference, Abu Dhabi,

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are added to the drilling fluid to reduce the coefficient of friction. According to field experience, a typical lubricant reduces 46. Golenkin, M.Y.E.; Biakov, A.P.; Eliseev, D.V.; Zavyalov, A.A.; Zhirkina, A.A.; Pico, Y.L.; Shapovalov, A.P.; Bulygin, I.A.; the coefficient of friction by approximately 20%, and a high-performance lubricant by up to 50% [22]. The friction reduction Yakovlev, I.M. The First for Russian OI Company State of Art Intelligent Completion System Real Time Cleanup performance of the Uptricant for coiled tubing ICTI application in ERWs depends on its concentration and on the presence of polyacrylamide fareiscestifer and fluid friction reducer), salt and sand in the fluid. Laboratory tests have shown that

polyacrylamide in a concentration greater than 1% adversely affects the performance of the lubricant while, when
 47. Vasquez Bautista, R.O.; Busaidi, A.A.; Awadalla, M.; Hawy, A.E.; Rawahi, O.; Haeser, P.; Naamani, H.; Rashdi, H.A.
 and reasing the lubricant concentration, the friction coefficient decreases, which is especially pronounced at higher salinity successfully Drilling the Longest Shallow ERD Wells in the Sultanate of Oman. In Proceedings of the SPE/IATMI Asia and conditions.
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The equivalent circulating density (ECD) is a combination of the static drilling fluid density and annular pressure loss. The ECD and hole cleaning are inter-related: poor hole cleaning can increase the ECD. The amount of particles present in the drilling fluid increases its density and thus the ECD. In addition, extended-reach wells are characterized by their long horizontal displacement. The annular pressure loss increases when increasing the annulus length, resulting in a continuous increase in the ECD with the measured depth (MD). This is a problem when the formation pressure gradient/fracture gradient window is narrow. The flow rate can be limited to control the annular pressure loss and reduce the ECD, but this can affect the quality of cuttings transport and cause a fluctuation in the ECD. which can cause formation fracturing and a loss of circulation. The presence of cuttings increases the pressure drop due to the reduction in the flow area inside the wellbore. An increase in the annular pressure loss was observed with a high pipe rotation speed in an eccentric annulus <sup>[10]</sup>. In the absence of cuttings, frictional pressure losses increase as the pipe rotation speed increases, but, in the presence of cuttings, due to a reduction in the stationary area of the cuttings bed, frictional pressure losses may decrease <sup>[24]</sup>.

The open-hole limit of an extended-reach well (the greatest measured depth of the horizontal ERW) mainly depends on the pressure drop in the annulus and the fracture pressure of the drilled formation <sup>[25]</sup>.

### 4. Barite Sag

Barite sag occurs when the mud is not circulated for a long time. However, it has been shown that a barite sag can form during circulation and can be thicker than when the flow is static. This process can be accelerated by slow circulating rates, casing running and wire line logging. In extended-reach wells, barite deposition can lead to wellbore mud losses, mud weight fluctuations, a stuck pipe and wellbore instability. This is una-voidable but can be managed through a combination of good operating procedures and drilling fluid design. A low shear rate viscosity is a critical factor in achieving good hole cleaning and avoiding barite settling <sup>[26]</sup>. In drilling ERWs, barite sag can be minimized or mitigated by increasing the low shear rate viscosity (LSRV) of the drilling fluid, rotating the drill pipe and using micronized weight materials.

## 5. Drilling Fluid Selection

Drilling fluid is extremely important for successful extended-reach drilling (ERD), so it should be chosen especially carefully in order to meet technical, economic and environmental requirements. Historically, oil or synthetic-based muds have tended to be the fluids of choice <sup>[26]</sup>. ERD drilling fluids are designed to generate a flatter rheological performance to reduce the effect of fluid rheology on the ECD. When selecting drilling fluids for extended-reach wells in areas that are particularly environmentally sensitive, the selection of drilling fluids should take into account technical and environmental criteria regarding the processing and disposal of cuttings and spent drilling fluid.

Oil-based fluids have been observed in the field to be better at removing cuttings from horizontal wells compared to waterbased fluids with similar rheological properties [27][28].

Oil-based muds (drilling fluids) (OBMs) include: a true oil-based mud containing 90–95% diesel oil and 5–10% water emulsified within the oil, an invert emulsion mud containing 60–90% oil and 10–40% water emulsified within the oil, emulsion muds (oil-in-water mud) and synthetic-based mud (SBM) that has a synthesized liquid base (polyalphaolefins (PAO), linear alphaolefins (LAOs), straight internal olefins (IOs), esters, vegetable oils and ethers). Various additives such as viscosifiers, emulsifiers, weighting material and other additives are added to the base fluid to adjust its properties and produce a stable and efficient fluid that will meet the requirements in specific well conditions.

In Western Siberia, oil-based mud was chosen in drilling a 152.4 mm horizontal section on the Samburgskoye field <sup>[29]</sup>. It provided optimal rheological parameters for shale inhibition, hole stability and lubricity. The implementation of an oil-based drilling fluid system was justified by the longer lateral section to be drilled. In addition, it helped to improve the RSS steerability and borehole quality <sup>[29]</sup>.

Invert emulsion mud can be formulated with mineral oil or other low-environmental-risk oil substitutes when necessary. In this mud, water and chemicals are used together to control the fluid loss and plastic viscosity. Invert emulsion muds (also known as non-aqueous fluids, NAFs) are the most commonly used oil mud. Invert emulsions generally provide an excellent cuttings integrity, good hole protection and a low coefficient of friction. The latter allows for easier rotation and, in

extended-reach drilling, greater flow around the underside side of the drill string. Their use has been a key driver of successful extended-reach drilling and hydrocarbon access <sup>[30]</sup>.

Synthetic-based muds share several advantages with traditional oil-based muds, including improved drilling rates, excellent wellbore stability, reduced torque, good hole cleaning and excellent cuttings integrity. The main advantage of SBMs compared to traditional OBMs is the reduced impact of cuttings and liquid mud on the environment.

By applying increasing environmental restrictions and stricter regulations, the oil industry has been forced to develop water-based inhibited fluid technology, combined with suitable lubricants, that can replace invert emulsion muds.

For extended-reach drilling, the most suitable water-based drilling fluids are those based on potassium, polymer mud with silicates or glycol <sup>[31]</sup>. These types of drilling fluids are used when shale inhibition is required. Mixed-metal silicates can be used if shale inhibition is not required. Drilling fluids for ERD wells are designed to provide a flatter rheological profile to reduce the effect of the fluid rheology on the equivalent circulating density (ECD) <sup>[26]</sup>.

To maximize the cuttings removal from the hole, new formulations of water-based muds were developed with the addition of different additives, such as: polymer beads (polyethylene, polypropylene), fibers (monofilament synthetic, polypropylene monofilament, cellulose nanofibers and natural hydrated basil seeds), nanoparticles, bio-based additives and a fuzzy ball <sup>[28]</sup>. The polymer beads improve the hydrodynamic resistance within the drilling fluid, leading to an increase in the drag coefficient. The fibers are dispersed in sweep fluids to form a stable network structure due to their entanglement. The fiber network prevents cuttings settling by mechanical contact and hydrodynamic interference between cuttings and fibers, and thus improves the drilling fluid carrying capacity. Bio-based additives and organic oils have been proposed to reduce the environmental impact of water-based muds and oil-based muds.

So far, both oil-based mud (OBM) and water-based muds (WBMs) have been used in practice, as well as the depth and assembly used to drill each of the wells. **Table 1** and **Table 2** summarize available data for 30 extended-reach wells drilled worldwide on 18 production fields.

Source	Well	Field	Location	KOP (m)	Measured Depth (MD), m	True Vertical Depth (TVD), m	MD/TVD	Drilling Assembly	Mud Type	
Lemons and Craig, 1989. <sup>[32]</sup>	H-13	P-0203 block	California, USA	183	3901	1877	2.08	N/A	N/A	
Morgan and Jiang, 1998; Jiang and Nian, 1998. [ <u>33][34]</u>	A 14	N/A	South China Sea	427	9238	approx 2750 m	3.36	kick sub on mud motor	water- based	
Meader et al., 2000. [ <u>35]</u>	M-16	Wytch Farm	England coast	N/A	11,278	approx 1700 m	6.63	steerable motor	oil-based	
	PN1y			150	6950	1676	4.15	-	-	
	PN1w	Harding	North Sea	150	7771	1762	4.41	RSS	oil-based	
Maganat	WN1			150	7621	1792	4.25	RSS	oil-based	
al., 2003.	A 16			400	7604	2800	2.72	RSS	oil-based	
_	A16 T2	Chirag	Caspian	400	7280	2750	2.65	RSS	oil-based	
	A17	Chiray	Sea	200	6383	2780	2.30	RSS	oil-based	
	A18			650	9586	2730	3.51	RSS	oil-based	
Schamp et al., 2006. [ <u>23]</u>	typical	Chayvo	Sakhalin, Russia	approx 200	9100- 11,134	approx 3000	3.03- 3.71	RSS	oil-based	

Table 1. The main information about the analyzed extended-reach wells.

Source	Well	Field	Location	KOP (m)	Measured Depth (MD), m	True Vertical Depth (TVD), m	MD/TVD	Drilling Assembly	Mud Type
Sonowal et al., 2009. [ <u>37]</u>	BD- 04A	Al-Shaheen	Qatar	approx 300	12,289	approx 1100	11.17	RSS	oil-based
Mirhaj et al., 2010. [ <u>38]</u>	N/A	N/A	North Sea	approx 350	5247	N/A	-	RSS	water- based
Walker, 2012. <sup>[39]</sup>	OP-11	Odoptu	Sakhalin, Russia	180	12,345	1784	6.92	-	-
Walker et al., 2009. <sup>[40]</sup>	Z-12	Chayvo	Sakhalin, Russia	200	11,680	2600	4.49	RSS	oil-based, synthetic- based
Gupta et al., 2013. [ <u>41]</u>	Z-44	Chayvo	Sakhalin, Russia	N/A	12,376	approx 2300	5.38	RSS	oil-based
Okot et al., 2015. <sup>[42]</sup>	A	Manifa	Saudi Arabia	N/A	8950 approx 3650		2.45	RSS	oil-based, synthetic- based
Muñoz et al., 2015. [ <u>43</u> ]	M-1	N/A	Saudi Arabia	275	11,293	approx 2500	4.52	-	oil-based
Kretsul et al., 2015. <sup>[29]</sup>	N/A	Samburgkoye	Western Siberia, Russia	approx 2150	4371	approx 3250	1.34	RSS	oil-based
	Control			2118	5262	N/A	-	RSS	oil-based
Ahn, 2015. [ <u>44]</u>	Α	N/A	N/A	3012	6096	N/A	-	-	-
	в			1993	4434	N/A	-	-	-
Buster et al., 2016. [21]	typical	Eagle Ford	USA	1829– 3048	4877–6096	1829– 3048	2–2.67	-	
Martinez et al., 2017. <sup>[45]</sup>	Perla-9	Perla	Venezuela	207	4660	2887	1.61	-	oil-based
<b>.</b>	12			N/A	6061	1571	3.86	-	-
Golenkin et al., 2020	13	Yury Korchagin	Caspian Sea	N/A	6390	1573	4.06	-	-
<u>.</u>	15	0		N/A	4684	1572	2.98	-	-
Vasquez Bautista et al., 2019. [47]	N/A	G	Oman	N/A	approx 3600	1078	3.34	-	-
Hussain et al., 2021. [ <u>48]</u>	A-36 A			approx 350	8800	2210	3.98	RSS	water- based
	A-36 B	Brage	North Sea	approx 350	9000	2079	4.33	RSS	water- based and oil-based

 Table 2. The construction of the analyzed extended-reach wells.

		Conductor		Surface Ca	sing	Intermedia	te Casing I	Casing II	Casing II		Production Casing/line	
Source	Well	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	
Lemons and Craig, 1989. <sup>[32]</sup>	H-13	508 (20)	133	406.4 (16)	469	339.725 (13 3/8)	1806	-	-	244.475 (9 5/8)	3482	
Morgan and Jiang, 1998; Jiang and Nian, 1998. <sup>[33]</sup> [34]	A 14	609.6 (24)	205	473.075 (18 5/8)	398	339.725 (13 3/8)	1728	244.475 (9 5/8)	6752	177.8 (7) liner	2578	
Meader et al., 2000. <sup>[<u>35</u>]</sup>	M-16			473.075 (18 5/8)	260	339.725 (13 3/8)	1008	244.475 (9 5/8)	7450	177.8 (7) liner	2921	
	PN1y				2285		4663					
	PN1w				2285	273.05 ×	5486					
	WN1				2237	(10 3/4 ×	5384					
Mason et al.,	A 16	-		339.725	1373	9 516)	6231	-	-	-	-	
2003. <sup>[36]</sup>	A16 T2			(13 3/8)	1373		5907					
	A17				1377	244.475	5006					
	Δ18				3166	(9 5/8)	6420					
	AIO				3100		6420			400.075		
Schamp et al., 2006. <sup>[23]</sup>	typical		-	473.075 (18 5/8)	800	346.075 (13 5/8)	3300	244.475 (9 5/8)	7800- 9600	168.275 or 177.8 (6 5/8 or 7) liner	1300- 3200	
Sonowal et al., 2009. <sup>[<u>37]</u></sup>	BD- 04A	508 (20)	176	339.725 (13 3/8)	897	244.475 (9 5/8)	1485			-		
Mirhaj et al., 2010. [ <u>38</u> ]	N/A	660.4 (26)	350	339.725 (13 3/8)		244.475 (9 5/8)	-			177.8 (7)	1680	
Walker, 2012. <sup>[39]</sup>	OP-11	-		473.075 (18 5/8)	800	346.075 (13 5/8)	5254			244.475 (9 5/8) liner	5652	
Walker et al., 2009. <sup>[40]</sup>	Z-12	762 (30)	97	473.075 (18 5/8)	801	339.725 (13 3/8)	3313			244.475 (9 5/8)	8019	
Gupta et al., 2013. [ <u>41]</u>	Z-44	-	-	473.075 (18 5/8)	800	346.075 (13 5/8)	4551	-		244.475 (9 5/8) liner	4450	
Okot et al., 2015. [ <u>42]</u>	A			473.075 (18 5/8)	317	346.075 (13 5/8)	1491	244.475 (9 5/8)	3411	177.8 (7) liner	4176	
Muñoz et al., 2015. <sup>[43]</sup>	M-1	-		473.075 (18 5/8)	275	339.725 (13 3/8)	1850	244.475 (9 5/8)	3375	177.8 (7) liner	5548	
Kretsul et al., 2015.	N/A	-		339.725 (13 3/8)	450	244.475 (9 5/8)	1200	-		177.8 (7)	3586	

		Conductor		Surface Casing		Intermediate Casing I		Intermediate Casing II		Production Casing/liner		
Source	Well	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Diameter, mm (in)	Length, m	Liner Shoe MD, m
Ahn, 2015. <sup>[44]</sup>	Control		_		_	_			_	114.3	5262	-
	в									(4 1/2)	4434	-
	Α	-	-	-	-	177.8 (7)	3297	-	-	114,3 (4 1/2)	3223	-
Buster et al., 2016. <sup>[21]</sup>	typical	339.725 (13 3/8)– 508 (20)	45	244.475 (9 5/8)	1524– 1829	193.675 (7 5/8)	305-1220		-	139.7 (5 1/2)	4877– 6096	
Martinez et al., 2017. <sup>[45]</sup>	Perla-9	762 (30)	202	508 (20)	642	339.725 (13 3/8)	1893	244.475 (9 5/8) liner	2008	127 (5) liner	4585	889
Golenkin et al., 2020 <sup>[46]</sup>	12	-	-	-	-	273.05 (10 3/4)	2587	-	-	177.8 (7)	3273	-
	13	-	-	-	-	273.05 (10 3/4)	2114	-	-	177.8 (7)	3526	-
	15	-	-	-	-	273.05 (10 3/4)	2303	-	-	177.8 (7)	2464	-
Vasquez Bautista et al., 2019. <sup>[47]</sup>	N/A	473.075 (18 5/8)	50	339.725 (13 3/8)	229	244.475 (9 5/8)	approximately 1250			177.8 (7) liner	-	-
Hussain et al., 2021. <sup>[48]</sup>	A-36 A	711.2 (28)	315	473.075 (18 5/8)	1615	339.725 (13 3/8)	1394	273.05 (10 3/4)	-	219.075 (8 5/8) liner		
	A-36 B	711.2 (28)	315	473.075 (18 5/8)	1615	339.725 (13 3/8)	4574	273.05 (10 3/4) liner	-	219.075 (8 5/8) liner	-	6935