

## Day in the Life of ...

### Tim, Junior Field Operator

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**Company:** [Canadian Natural Resources Limited](#)  
**Location:** Knopcik Area (North and West of [Grande Prairie, AB](#))  
**Salary:** See PSAC [Occupation Profiles](#) for average Field Operator salaries.  
**Education:** Grade 12, [SAIT](#) Production Field Operator Certificate.

*Salary, education and advancement may vary from company to company.*

Tim worked in all areas of the oil and gas industry before switching to a career in agriculture, where he stayed put for 15 years. He eventually found his way back to oil and gas and recalls, "The [technology](#) and practices used in the field have greatly improved. I left agriculture for a secure job in an industry that would be here tomorrow. I took Field Operator courses at SAIT, hoping oil and gas employers would take me seriously. Operating seemed to offer a challenging career that set high expectations for me."

Tim's coursework paid off and he is now able to apply that knowledge in a rewarding Field Operator career with Canadian Natural Resources (CNRL). "The challenge of the job and the support of the other people in my crew, are the most inspiring things that affect me each day." Tim is a stand-up guy, who takes a lot of pride in his work, and is always willing to pitch-in. The word "busy" is an understatement for Tim, who enjoys the variety and responsibility offered to him as a Field Operator.

My typical day looks like this:

**6:55 am** - Arrive at Knopcik Plant. I usually have a quick coffee and chit-chat with the crew about last night's hockey game between the Hythe Mustangs and Spirit River Rangers. It's always a lively debate!

**7:10 am** - My job as Junior Field [Operator](#) is to optimize well production in a safe and efficient manner. I also perform production volume reporting, such as reading gauges to monitor pressure, density, trouble shoot wells and maintain production rates. I also perform routine maintenance of equipment on the wellsite. Right now, I have two field runs – East and Bear runs. I look after 35 - 40 wells extending from [Grande Prairie](#) to [Hythe](#). I spend most of my day outdoors and have a nice company truck to drive from site to site.

Other morning duties include regular safety and production meetings. At the last meeting we covered vehicle safety and safe handling of chemical [hydrates](#). We review plant operations, proposed drilling and project updates at our production meetings.

I work with [plant operators](#), other [field operators](#), and I report to the assistant foreman and lead foreman. Frequently, I get calls from our plant operators about maintenance needed for our [compressors](#), or I'll check up on [casing](#) pressures, and ensure pumps and engines are fully functional. This week, I'll be checking on a new well placed on line, and a [plunger lift](#) that was recently installed.

**7:30 am** - I use a handheld device to take field readings which record tank volumes in pipelines. The first well on my route was drilled in 1964 and still produces gas to this day. We just put a pump jack on it, to pump the small amount of water it makes to surface.

**8:30 am** - On my drive out, I notice the road is starting to fill with trees and bush in the corner. I will mention this at the next safety meeting, to ensure that this corner is cleared and will make for safer driving conditions.



**12:00 pm** – By noon, I have visited 15 wells and 3 compressors. I've been busy fixing [soap pumps](#), changing plugs which keep out any liquids in the fuel gas, apply [batch-treatment techniques](#) to control corrosion in a well. I also hooked-up a [cata-dyne heater](#) and loaded [pigs](#) in a pipeline, which clean out rust, wax, scale and debris.

All this activity definitely makes you hungry! CNRL implemented a new health program about a year ago, to promote health and wellness amongst staff. It's a great program, and some of the guys have really bought into it. The company provides healthy snacks and breakfast cereals to promote healthy eating.

**1:10 pm** – I get a call from our plant operator to check on one of the wells. It appears to have missed a cycle.

**2:20 pm** - I stop by [Hythe](#) to pick up bus freight containing instrumentation tools. I also get a call from another field operator who needs a hand adjusting a [polish rod](#). I don't mind helping out to get the job done.

**4:50 pm** – Perform routine cleaning and garbage pick-up. I head back to the office to checkout and put myself on-call for the east and north runs.

#### Work Environment:

I spend most of my day out in the field, driving around from site to site in the company truck. Since I cover 2 field runs, I have to be on call and carry a pager in case anything comes up. When I get a call, I usually know what the problem is and how to fix it right away. I work 8 days on and 6 days off, with a regular 10 hour, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm shift. The first winter on-the-job can be difficult, but eventually you get used to it. There is some flexibility and like anything else in life, there is always some planning and juggling when you have a family. I have two young kids and I'm able to enjoy activities, like coaching minor hockey or helping out at the local rodeo each year.

#### Skills I use most in the job are:

Mechanical aptitude and ability. Knowledge of computers is helpful, which play a major role in our day to day operations.

#### Why the team can't survive without me!

What I do daily has the largest impact on individual well performance. Without me, there are no wells flowing and no gas going to the plant.

#### What I love about my job:

Outdoors and independence. Our foremen are great, and we're given enough responsibility to feel pride in our jobs.

#### My career path:

When I applied for a job with CNRL, I was afraid I was a little too old to be changing careers. I spent 15 years in agricultural retail before coming to work at CNRL. I was really surprised at the variety of backgrounds people came from. The fellow that interviewed me was born and raised on a First Nations reserve near the plant and worked as a mechanical apprentice. Others came from forestry, farming and trucking industries.

I took a Field Operations course at SAIT by correspondence before applying. I wanted to show that I was actually serious about working in the industry and not just kicking tires. CNRL emphasizes education and it is backed up with promotions as you complete courses and put in enough time at the job.

#### What surprised me most about the oil and gas industry:

I was very surprised by the amount of responsibility that is given to individuals who are looking for a challenging career.

#### My best 'pat-on-the-back' moment at work:

I've been at CNRL for 2.5 years and had started the Field Operations course, but just dragged my feet with it. Eventually I finished the course and received a raise. My supervisors mentioned this to others, and I really felt a sense of accomplishment.

#### Major life accomplishment:

Buying the acreage, and building a place in the country for my family.