

Rapid City Courts Energy Business

Associated Press

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Economic development officials believe the southwestern South Dakota city of Rapid City is in a prime spot to lure more energy-related businesses — even though it's not in the heart of energy territory.

Rapid City Economic Development Center President Ben Snow said during an energy conference that the region has a quality of life that is superior to northwestern North Dakota and Montana, where the oil business is booming. Attributes touted during the New Horizons Oil & Gas Conference on Thursday included Rapid City's location on an interstate, a business-friendly climate and its weather climate, the Rapid City Journal reported (<http://bit.ly/1rsTsGP> [1]).

"We have opportunities in South Dakota and particularly in the (Rapid City) region to make the sale to companies that are maybe too wimpy for the cold," Snow said. "For those companies who have to be right at ground zero, more power to them, but there's probably a slice of companies that don't have to be right there and will say, 'if I can be right here, that's close enough.'"

Rapid City is centrally located among three major energy-production areas — the Bakken oil fields in northwestern North Dakota, the Powder River Basin in southeast Montana and northeast Wyoming, and the Denver-Julesburg basins. Rapid City is within 300 miles of all three — near enough for companies to service the energy industry but far enough that employees wouldn't have to deal with the challenges of living in a boom town.

"We're close, but not too close," Snow said.

Rapid City will be courting energy businesses or businesses that service the oil industry, such as steel and plastic manufacturers, as it launches a new business marketing campaign, Snow said. The campaign's slogan has a picture of Mount Rushmore and the words, "Face-to-face with freedom. Conduct business with the freedom our founding fathers intended: less regulation, less red tape, less taxes, less trouble."

The South Dakota School of Mines & Technology adds to Rapid City's allure to energy companies, President Heather Wilson said. The college is educating engineers who can play a lead role in the energy industry and will offer a new minor degree next year focused on oil and gas production, she said.

Source URL (retrieved on 03/29/2015 - 2:37am):

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