

Frequently Asked Questions in Energy

I have an idea, but I am not sure if it is new. How can I find out?

One source of earlier patent publications is www.espacenet.com where you can do an informal search to get a better feel for how new your invention is, before incurring professional fees. We are happy to conduct a professional search if you prefer. Note, as virtually any public disclosure before filing for a patent will be relevant to its validity, no search can be exhaustive. See www.hgf.com/energy for some searching tips for the energy industry.

I have a new use for a known tool, can I get a patent for that?

If the new use isn't obvious then generally, yes, you can gain a patent towards the new use of a known tool.

I have disclosed my invention, can I still patent it?

If you have made a full public disclosure which sufficiently shows or describes how the invention works, then a subsequently filed patent in most countries (except USA) would not be valid over this disclosure. Contact us to discuss whether your disclosure would fall into this category or if other aspects of your invention may still be validly protectable. Note, certain disclosures are disregarded in the USA so protection there may be possible for a limited period of time – contact us as soon as possible if you are interested in protection in the USA.

I am combining two known tools, can I get a patent for such a combination?

If the combination isn't obvious then generally, yes, you can gain a patent towards a new combination of known tools.

Can you patent a method?

Yes. A patent doesn't need to protect tangible devices but can protect pure methods or procedures, for example a modified well treatment process or a new way to manufacture an existing tool.

My idea seems obvious so I understand that means it's unpatentable?

Whilst the idea will need to be 'not-obvious' to be validly patentable, we find that innovators are often rather modest about what they regard as 'obvious' and often anticipate the bar for this to be higher than it is. Commercial success can also help support an argument that your idea is not obvious. Do discuss your idea with us before dismissing it as obvious and unpatentable.