



SWPA-EHP

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The Case for an Unconventional Natural Gas Health Registry

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DEP Citizens Advisory Council

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SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

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Our mission is to respond to individuals' and communities' need for access to accurate, timely and trusted public health information and health services associated with natural gas extraction.



The Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project

Health Evaluations and Support

- Nurse Practitioner
- Health assessments
- Consultations
- Referrals for health services
- Health Provider education
- Clinical toxicity profiles

Accurate, Trusted and Timely Public Health Information

- Identification of exposure pathways
- Measurement tools
- Consultation on water reports
- Assessment of air exposures
- Evaluation of health risks



Ch. 78a Comments Submitted 5.19.15

EHP's five primary concerns with respect to the proposed revision of Chapter 78a are below. Each point seeks to strengthen the DEP's role in protecting health in the context of shale gas development:

1. Allowing gas development (well sites as well as other industrial activities) near schools puts children at risk. As currently written, proposed revisions to Chapter 78a do not protect school children from harm.
2. Noise mitigation must be adequate to protect nearby residents and must include compliance oversight by the DEP.
3. Emergency planning is insufficient to protect those living, working, or going to school near shale gas development sites.
4. Centralized tank storage sites should be at a health protective distance from schools, their parks and playgrounds.
5. Regulation addressing the emissions from compressor stations, metering stations, and processing plants are absent. These facilities produce emissions that can reach nearby homes.



What Is a Health Registry?

- Some are designed to monitor the incidence and prevalence of well-understood diseases
- Some serve as a surveillance system for the occurrence of unexpected/harmful events resulting from products and (often medical) services
- *Some shed light on an incompletely understood disease or constellation of health conditions that appear to have the same origin; define associations between environmental exposures and adverse health events*



Why Do We Need One?

- Inconsistent documentation of illness plausibly linked to UNGD
- Gaps in knowledge about the full range of exposures
- Need to find responses to individuals exposed to contaminants at their homes, schools, and workplaces



EHP's Activities to Promote Health Registry

- February 2014 meeting of academics (University of Pittsburgh, University of Pennsylvania, University of CO) and NGOs (EHP, Earthworks Oil & Gas Accountability Project, Physicians, Scientists, & Engineers for Healthy Energy)
- Preparation of “The Case for an Unconventional Natural Gas Development Health Registry” white paper in fall 2014
- Two-day invited workshop designed to address questions raised in the white paper held May 4 & 5, 2015, in Chicago, IL



24 participants at the May 4-5 meeting included:

- Public health department reps from PA, MD, CO, & CA
- Academics from universities in MA, NY, CA, WV, PA, & CO
- NGO representatives from DC, NY, PA, CT, ME, OH & WY
- National federal agency (NIEHS)

The areas of expertise of participants:

- Medical (physicians, nurse practitioners)
- Toxicology
- Epidemiology (including health registries)
- Air and water emissions
- Community outreach/organizing



Major Points of Agreement in the Workshop:

- As health symptoms collected appear non-specific and emissions measurements are incomplete, probably too soon for a registry *despite* significant concern for potential short and long run health impacts
- Efforts should be made to “roster” as many individuals with plausible exposures as possible for future research
- Health and emissions data going forward should be collected in a standardized form across all states



Follow Up Steps for Workshop Attendees

- Provide the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommendations for easily replicable roster of callers to a new statewide hotline;
- Initiate discussions of a roster to be developed/administered by trusted NGOs with regional/national expertise
- Serve as a sounding board for CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network special topics task force on the health impacts of UNGD.
- Offer EHP suggestions to strengthen its first draft of a case description of health impacts from UNGD exposure.



Next Steps for EHP on Health Registry Workshop

- Provide a summary of the workshop discussion to participants
- Revise white paper to incorporate recommendations from workshop and submit for publication
- Widely disseminate revised white paper to public health agencies at all governmental levels
- Provide leadership/communications on workshop “next steps”



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Thank you very much for your time

For more information

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