

## **Public Statement on *Rolling Stone* Article Titled “America’s Radioactive Secret”**

### ***Background:***

*On January 21, 2020, Rolling Stone published an article by journalist Justin Nobel titled “[America’s Radioactive Secret](#),” subtitled “Oil-and-gas wells produce nearly a trillion gallons of toxic waste a year. An investigation shows how it could be making workers sick and contaminating communities across America.” The article discusses the radioactivity brought to the surface in oil and gas development and the many different pathways of contamination posed to the industry’s workers, the public and communities, and the environment. The reporting uncovered never-before-released reports from the oil and gas industry that highlight the problem and its risks to workers and the public, as well as recent court cases indisputably linking worker cancers to radioactivity exposure on the job. These documents reveal that everyday oil and gas work involves considerable exposure to radioactive materials that can lead to cancer.*

*In the article, Raina Rippel, director of the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP) is quoted as saying: “The workers are going to be the canaries. The radioactivity issue is not something we have adequately unpacked. Our elected leaders and public-health officials don’t have the knowledge to convey we are safe.” Meanwhile, the federal government and many state governments have granted the shale gas industry unprecedented exemptions from laws that control the release and monitoring of radiation.*

### ***EHP Statement on the Article:***

The *Rolling Stone* article accurately reflects the concerns we have had for nearly a decade now. Radioactive materials released in shale gas development, including the waste stream, are already causing serious and sometimes catastrophic health issues for workers in the industry. As time goes by, these health issues will only worsen. Further, the release of radiation into the environment – whether through brine spreading, landfill dumping, pipeline leaks, or the fracking process itself – puts anyone living in the vicinity at profound risk of health issues for years to come. Governor Wolf, the PA Department of Environmental Protection, and the PA Department of Health need to step in immediately to close loopholes and prevent emissions. We may not be able to put the genie back in the bottle, but at least we can keep it from being so dangerous.

**Raina Rippel, Director**  
**Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project**  
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