

Alert Concerning a Flare Event Where Children are Outside

This alert is for parents and anyone who works with children.

It has come to our attention at the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project that a flare occurred at a natural gas drilling site very close to a school while children were playing outside.

From an air pollution model that we have developed, we know that under many conditions emissions from a well site would likely reach an area within about 360 yards of it. This means that pollutants from the flaring site could have easily travelled to the school grounds. These pollutants could have been emitted at concentrations that are of concern.

What you need to know

There is inadequate information about emissions from shale gas activities generally; and there is even less known about the effects of shale gas activity on children. Because there is so little known we encourage you to be vigilant about your children and their possible exposures. People near drill sites that are active have reported respiratory problems (particularly for those with asthma), dizziness, headaches, nausea and other gastrointestinal problems. Skin conditions are also frequently reported. We are not certain that any will occur in the children who were near the flaring, but you should be aware that it's possible.

What we suggest you do

If you have any concerns about your child's health:

- Call or bring him/her to the doctor.
- Let the doctor know about the flaring incident.
- Medical professionals should know that your child may have been exposed to carbon monoxide, particles and potentially damaging organic compounds.
- Again, we do not know the children's exact exposures and their concentrations, but we think it is best to be extra-cautious.

Be sure to...

- Wash the clothes and shoes your child was wearing during the flaring event to get rid of any particles (fine dust) that may have settled on them.
- Have your child bathe and wash his hair for that same reason.
- There is a higher risk of exposure for children who were outside, but even if your child was inside, you might want to take these steps as well.
- We encourage you to be calm when talking to your child about this event or if you ask him or her to take a bath and change clothes. No one wants to burden a child with unnecessary worries if it can be avoided.
- Minimize/reduce levels of activity in the future, particularly outdoors (i.e. soccer, etc.) during flaring events.

If you'd like more information, please contact:

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