PA Attorney General Releases Report on Grand Jury Investigation into Harms Tied to Shale Gas Development


EHP released a Public Statement regarding the Grand Jury report, highlighting the need for greater setbacks and regional aggregation of emissions across facilities to determine air quality impacts.

The Grand Jury put forth eight recommendations, summarized in the press release from the Attorney General’s office. Six of these have a direct impact on reducing health risks:

- Expanding no-drill zones [setbacks] in Pennsylvania from the required 500 feet to 2,500 feet
- Requiring fracking companies to publicly disclose all chemicals used in drilling and hydraulic fracturing before they are used on-site
- Requiring the regulation of gathering lines, used to transport unconventional gas hundreds of miles
- Adding up all sources of air pollution in a given area to accurately assess air quality
- Requiring safer transport of the contaminated waste created from fracking sites
- Conducting a comprehensive health response to the effects of living near unconventional drilling sites

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.

Pennsylvania Constitution, Natural resources and the public estate. Article 1, Section 27: The Environmental Rights Amendment, May 18, 1971, P.L.769, J.R.3

DOH Not Actively Protecting Pennsylvanians Living Near Shale Gas Development

EHP and Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR-PA) met with PA Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine and other DOH staff to discuss the lack of action by the DOH in light of scientific evidence of health impacts related to shale gas development. Also discussed were the two studies commissioned by the DOH last year to examine the health effects of shale gas development. Center for Coalfield Justice, EHP, and PSR-PA put out a press release detailing the meeting.
EHP invites you to the 2nd webinar of our three-part series about shale gas development and cancer.

Tuesday, September 15 | 7:00 PM EDT

Register here: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ISaES0UAQCWPcYcgQiGL_w](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ISaES0UAQCWPcYcgQiGL_w)

Dr. Shaina Stacy is a postdoctoral associate at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, where she investigates early life and environmental risk factors for childhood cancers. She received her Ph.D. and M.P.H. from Pitt Public Health’s Department of Environmental & Occupational Health.

The 1st webinar in the series featured Marsha Haley, MD, exploring Shale Gas Extraction and Cancer. The video will be available on [EHP’s website](https://www.environmentalhealthproject.org) in the near future.

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**Shale Gas Development and Cancer Factsheet**

EHP’s latest factsheet addresses cancer risks related to substances used in or emitted by shale gas development. It also explains the difficulty in identifying causal relationships between environmental exposure and cancer, and provides advice to reduce risk of exposure. We hope that you find it useful in conversations with patients whose lives are impacted by shale gas development.

EHP factsheets are available (at no cost) for distribution at your practice. Contact Debbie Larson at [dlarson@environmentalhealthproject.org](mailto:dlarson@environmentalhealthproject.org) if you are interested.
Health Care Providers and Advocates Urge DEP to Control Emissions of Methane/VOCs

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently collected comments on a proposed rule to better control emissions of methane and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from oil and gas development. A total of 39 health care providers and health advocates signed on to a letter asking that the rule be approved. The letter also urged the closure of a loophole for low-producing wells, as well as the elimination of a provision that allows operators to reduce the frequency of inspections if previous inspections do not reveal significant methane leaks.

Health Care Providers Caution the Governor and the DOH to Address Public Health Risks from Shale Gas Development

Fifty-five health care providers signed on to a letter asking that Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine of the DOH address real and potential public health risks inherent in shale gas development. Specifically, to:

1. Take a precautionary approach to shale gas development (fracking)
2. Hold the shale gas industry fully accountable for emitting pollutants through effective regulation and by enforcement of commensurate penalties
3. Inform and educate the public about how to best protect themselves and their families from harm linked to shale gas emissions and waste streams

Read EHP’s press release for more information.

Featured Research Reviews

Cushing et al. (2020): Flaring Events and Birth Outcomes

A research team from UCLA and USC took a novel approach to examining the relationship between poor birth outcomes and shale gas development in south Texas by specifically considering proximity to flaring events. The team looked back at 23,487 birth records in Texas’ Eagle Ford Shale region from between 2012 and 2015. They compared the birth outcomes from mothers exposed to the most flaring events, based on satellite observations, with birth outcomes from mothers who were not exposed to flaring events during their pregnancies. Between these two groups, they saw 50% higher odds of preterm birth and shorter gestation in the group exposed to flares. Read the full review HERE.
Can Air Pollution Impact Your Mental Health?  July 15, 2020

From smog hanging over cities to smoke inside the home, air pollution poses a major threat to our health and climate. Air pollution causes about 7 million premature deaths every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, COPD, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections. Researchers are investigating other impacts of air pollution, as they examine connections between diabetes and obesity. Now, add to that growing list: psychological distress. Read the Blog HERE.

Environmental Health Medical Toolkit

If you suspect that your patient may be experiencing symptoms related to environmental exposure, you may want to inquire about their source of drinking water, and proximity to shale gas development infrastructure and municipal waste sites.

EHP’s Medical Toolkit contains guidance for recognizing symptoms of environmental exposure with patients who live in regions of shale gas development. Watch this video which illustrates what the toolkit has to offer.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine designates this enduring material for a maximum of 1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. For more information, click HERE.

The Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP) is a nonprofit public health organization that assists and supports residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond who believe their health has been, or could be, impacted by shale gas development (fracking).

Services offered by EHP
- Medical Toolkit – Screening & Assessment Tools – Reference Materials
- CME/CEU Credits
- Latest health studies related to shale gas development
- Previous HCP Newsletters
- Speakers on health topics related to environmental exposure and shale gas development

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EHP defends public health in the face of oil and gas development. We provide frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation and guidance. We engage diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, public servants, and others. Because knowledge protects health.

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