

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

April 3, 2012

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

EPA is working to finalize new standards for natural gas operations to reduce emissions of smog-forming volatile organic compounds and toxic air pollutants that can cause cancer and other serious health effects. As you consider these standards, we ask that you consider a new study from the Colorado School of Public Health that raises concerns about the potential public health impact of air emissions from unconventional gas drilling operations.¹ The findings from this study, while preliminary, reinforce the importance of your forthcoming rules and the need for additional research.

Scientists at the Colorado School of Public Health examined three years of air monitoring data in Garfield County, Colorado and concluded that residents living near natural gas wells may face increased exposure to benzene, a known human carcinogen, and other toxic chemicals, such as ethylbenzene, toluene, and xylene. The researchers found higher lifetime cancer risks for people living closer to the wells. They also concluded that these nearby residents have a higher risk of experiencing neurological and respiratory health effects, such as headaches, throat and eye irritation, impaired lung capacity, dizziness, fatigue, numbness in the limbs, and tremors.²

The authors concluded:

¹ Lisa M. McKenzie, Roxana Z. Witter, Lee S. Newman, and John L. Adgate, Colorado School of Public Health, *Human Health Risk Assessment of Air Emissions from Development of Unconventional Natural Gas Resources* (Mar. 2012). The study will be published in an upcoming edition of *Science of the Total Environment*.

² *Id.*

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[P]reliminary results indicate that health effects resulting from air emissions during development of unconventional natural gas resources are most likely to occur in residents living nearest to the well pads and warrant further study. Risk prevention efforts should be directed towards reducing air emission exposures for persons living and working near wells during well completions.³

We support the responsible and safe production of U.S. oil and natural gas resources. The good news is that we can control potentially harmful air emissions from drilling operations by implementing proven technology and best practices already in use today. We hope that you will consider the results of this new study in your rulemaking, and we look forward to reviewing EPA's new rules once finalized.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

cc: The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman

The Honorable Cliff Stearns
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

³ *Id.*