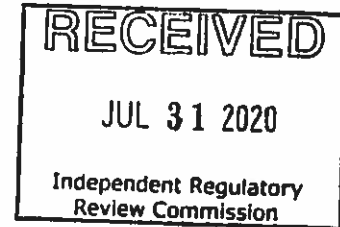


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Testimony for Control of VOC Emissions from Oil and Natural Gas Sources

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My name is Scott Smith, and I live in Pittsburgh. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

You know, there's an old riddle about a stabbing victim lying next to a puddle of water with no apparent weapon found anywhere. How did the victim die? The answer, of course, is that the puddle had once been an icicle, which was conveniently used in the crime and now leaves no trace of its original threat.

Methane and VOCs are much like this icicle. They appear to be as innocuous as a puddle of water, but in reality they carry with them the potential to be an enormous threat to our health. I don't need to tell those of you at the Department of Environmental Protection that methane and VOCs are emitted at every phase of shale gas development. You know that already.

You also know that methane is odorless and invisible – but it can turn the planet into a place inhospitable for human life. Methane contributes mightily to global warming which, in turn, engenders deadly heat waves and worsens devastating hurricanes, tornados, floods, and forest fires. It also multiplies insect-borne diseases like Lyme disease.

Equally hidden from view, VOCs can attack our lungs, our hearts, and our brains. Some VOCs, like benzene, are known human carcinogens. VOCs can shorten our lives and make us more susceptible to respiratory infections like COVID-19.

As someone who works in the field of public health and lives in a city that ranks as having some of the worst air in the nation, I have to wonder: Is there really any safe level of VOCs the human body can absorb? Or are we merely rolling the dice and accepting the odds that, increasingly, the health of Pennsylvanians will be compromised?

Commonsense rules, like the draft VOC rule before you now, are a good first step to protecting our health. I ask that you consider strengthening this rule by:

1. Closing the loophole that exempts low-producing wells from the rule's leak detection and repair requirements. Low-producing wells are responsible for more than half of the methane pollution from oil and gas sources in

Pennsylvania, and all wells, regardless of production, require routine inspections.

2. Eliminate the provision that allows operators to reduce the frequency of inspections if previous inspections do not reveal significant methane leaks. Research shows that large, uncontrolled leaks are random and can only be detected with frequent and regular inspections.

Look, even healthy people, if they're smart, get regular check ups. We should require frequent and regular inspections of wells, no matter how healthy they may seem today.

Our air pollution crisis is not some biblical apocalypse. It's simply our environment reacting to the stress that we, as human consumers, place on it. In other words, this is not a matter of whether or not we are destroying our planet. The planet will be live on. It will heal. We humans just might not be here to be a part of it.

Thank you.