

Statement made by Mary Jane Uttech, Deputy Public Health Director, Cortland County Health Department at the EPA Hearing in Binghamton, NY on September 13, 2010

I am the Deputy Public Health Director for Cortland County.

During the public comment period, the EPA criticized New York's dSGEIS for a lack of emphasis on potential health impacts of drilling.

I would like the EPA to study 4 areas that impact public health:

First, air quality: Air pollution from gas drilling creates a significant amount of haze-forming chemicals. The few studies that have been done on the health effects have been preliminary, but indicate that there is a link between the chemicals found in the air and the health problems local residents have experienced.

Second, radioactive waste water generated by fracking: How will it be handled safely through all phases of the drilling process?

Third, contamination of the food chain.: Some of the chemicals that are used are known carcinogens and endocrine disruptors that could cause a wide variety of health problems.

Fourth, water: Cortland County residents obtain their drinking water from the ground, most of them from a sole source aquifer, so there is no other economically feasible source of water. 39,000 people currently depend on that aquifer for water and most of the land over the aquifer is now leased to gas companies. Even a minor mishap in that area could affect the public's health because some of the hydro-fracturing chemicals can neither be tasted nor smelled in water at levels that are high enough to cause disease. Public water supplies are normally only tested for chemical contamination every three years, long enough for serious health consequences to occur. Private water supplies are rarely, if ever, tested for chemicals.

A vertically-drilled gas well, contaminated water wells in Cortland County over 3,000 feet away from the drilling site, well over the distance required for testing in New York's dSGEIS. 17 homes lost their source of drinking water. To this day, that water remains contaminated. The records for that event are kept at the Cortland County Health Department.

Thank you.

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