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**MARCELLUS SHALE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE**

**Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

Presented By  
Douglas E. Hill  
Executive Director  
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Good morning. I am Douglas E. Hill, Executive Director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). CCAP is a non-profit, non-partisan association providing legislative and regulatory representation, education, research, insurance, technology, and other services on behalf of all of the Commonwealth's 67 counties.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our members' perspective on emergency management issues in the Marcellus gas drilling areas.

The rapid expansion of the Marcellus gas industry into Pennsylvania has provided the state with an edge in the ever demanding area of energy production. However, the local governments – both county and municipal – and our residents in these gas abundant areas have been experiencing many economic, infrastructure, and social impacts from the drilling of Marcellus shale.

Recently, CCAP surveyed its membership to quantify local impacts of Marcellus Shale related activities, and found solid evidence supporting the anecdotal information we had been presenting to the General Assembly and the Administration. In addition to the obvious impacts on township roads, our study revealed a list of broad-ranging impacts on county governments and the services they provide, which include emergency management and hazardous materials response planning, courts and corrections impacts, human services burdens in areas such as drug and alcohol, domestic relations, and children and youth, effects on affordable housing, hotel and tourism impacts, and even impacts on core courthouse services such as the recorder's office.

To the topic at hand, Marcellus Shale gas exploration and development has created a number of specific service demands relating to emergency management. As you know, counties have responsibility for doing all-hazards planning for emergency management, have responsibility for the 911 call taking and dispatch system, have responsibility for hazardous materials inventory, planning, and response, and are required to develop comprehensive plans for land use. Marcellus shale extraction presents a unique hazard, including planning requirements, variety of risks, and specialized responses.

While the most commonly perceived risk is the stereotypical well fire, the more common and more frequent risks include worker accidents and injuries, and spills and other environmental occurrences. These risks are not confined to the drilling site, but extend to the line placement locations. In addition, because the majority of Marcellus workers for now are out-of-state transients, there are the community issues involved with that life-style.

Counties impacted by Marcellus exploration have had to review their all-hazards plans to determine whether the unique issues with this exposure are adequately addressed and planned for and, if not, have had to make appropriate revisions. In most counties, we have had good cooperation from the industry in developing these specialized planning elements. On site, the most difficult planning is for containment and response for fire and capping incidents, for which local responders are ill-equipped. The company will normally have responsibility for containment and suppression, while the local responders will augment those efforts and provide area security. Dependent on the nature of the incident, other agencies including PEMA and DEP

will be called in. For most other incidents, the county will plan for dispatch of fire, police, and ambulance as appropriate.

Still, some counties have indicated that they would like to have more direct response capability for their local fire companies, including equipment and training to deal with hazards as significant as blowouts or well fires. Many of the counties are coordinating meetings with gas company representatives to further discuss training county response teams, and one county even has a well head they use for mock incident response training (which they have opened up to other counties to train on as well).

Planning and response also includes determination of sites. In this respect, counties are giving specific addresses – “street” addresses or GPS coordinates – to the sites, to aid in dispatch and response. This includes not only the drilling sites but the pump stations, compressor stations, and impoundment areas. This involves close cooperation with the developers and local officials.

In addition to developing the plans, we must periodically do exercises so that responders are familiar with command-and-control, operational details, and other issues relating to the response.

Additionally, given the nature of frac recovery of this resource, we have had to determine whether updates are needed to our hazardous materials inventories and our hazardous materials response plans.

All of this has created additional time and expense for county emergency management and our staff, as well as additional training and planning time for our responders and municipal partners.

A specific concern counties have voiced is the lack of consistent record keeping for natural gas drilling and for drilling contamination. While we have access to DEP’s database to determine when permits have been filed, it would facilitate our planning if there were some local notice, either by DEP or the corporations, when any new activity is about to be undertaken. In addition to the well sites, this would include installation of pump and compressor stations and lines. The intent is to give us clear notice so we can do proper addressing and anticipate hazard needs.

We would also like more direct information on incidents, including nature, contractors involved, and resolution. Many other states have on-line databases for this purpose; Pennsylvania has nothing comparable that we are aware of. The availability of incident reports could inform counties and their constituents, which would aid in planning and hazards identification and could give counties opportunities to share knowledge on successful and unsuccessful response strategies.

We are also seeing community response issues, with significant increases in call volume – at least one county reports an increase of 33% -- for incidents secondarily related to Marcellus. These include worker behavior issues and issues related to the traffic volume created by the significant number of trucks carrying water and gravel necessary for development of the wells. In addition to the normal volume and operator issues with trucks, we have increasing concerns about the adequacy and repair of the vehicles, and the secondary highway hazard problems being created by truck-driven deterioration of our roads and bridges.

To assist us in meeting emergency management and other Marcellus-generated costs, our Association has gone on record in support of a severance tax on natural gas, contingent on a guaranteed and equitable allocation to host counties, host municipalities, and non-host municipalities in host counties. Note that while we express this support in the context of emergency management and other local impacts, counties oppose any restrictions on the use of severance tax funds by any unit of local government, and will oppose any special local mechanism for its administration. Instead, tax proceeds should be administered by the county or municipal governing body through the usual budget process, for purposes determined locally that meet local needs.

The recently amended HB 1489 substantively meets these objectives. In addition, we note that the bill includes a specific allocation for local volunteer companies; we have in the past supported state funding to aid these indispensable allies in our emergency management efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks. We will be pleased to answer your questions or furnish additional information.