

Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee

**Testimony of
Craig Konkle, Chairman
Lycoming County Community Gas Exploration Taskforce Safety Subcommittee
June 29, 2010**

Good morning Chairman Baker and members of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss emergency responder preparedness for incidents related to the exploration, drilling and production of natural gas. My name is Craig Konkle, Chairman of the Lycoming County Community Gas Exploration Taskforce Safety Committee. I also am a current member of the PIOGA/MSC (Pennsylvania Independent Oil & Gas Association and Marcellus Shale Coalition) Safety Committee and the Crisis Management Subcommittee.

In May 2008 the Board of Commissioners for the County of Lycoming and the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce collaborated to form a Community Gas Exploration Task Force (CGETF). Earlier that year a number of gas companies began to establish a major presence in Lycoming County to arrange leases with County landowners. The purpose of the Task Force is to *identify key issues, research facts and information, and review and propose public policy regarding the positive, economic impact of gas exploration of the Marcellus Shale in Lycoming County.*

Subsequently the Task Force formed (7) seven subcommittees, one of those being the Safety Subcommittee in August 2008. The mission of this committee is to *"Contribute to the improvement of life by fostering a safe and secure arena for the exploration and production of the area's natural gas resource. This is accomplished by maintaining a leadership role that promotes programs, methods, and approaches to educate both emergency responders and the general public of the County of Lycoming."*

The first task at hand was to staff the subcommittee with members from multiple disciplines within the emergency planning, preparedness, response areas. A hazardous materials planner, volunteer fire chief, DEP response member and local health system representative are a few that represent this committee. Our initial task was to establish goals and objectives which are listed below.

1. **Short-Term:** 1) Identify companies operating in the County and establish relationships. 2) Amend County 911 addressing ordinance to reflect gas wells, compressor stations and impoundments. 3) Identify the personnel who need training i.e., fire, rescue, EMS, EMA, police, and hospitals. 4) Provide awareness training to emergency responders and regional rescue resources.
2. **Mid-Range:** 1) Identify specialized emergency response training, support documentation and equipment needed to sustain response to incidents at remote gas well sites. 2) Attempt to establish a funding stream to provide immediate need

programs to be delivered to first responders and the medical community. i.e., Crush injuries, hazards awareness and gas well and pipeline fires.

3. **Long-Range:** 1) Develop a safety & training consortium consisting of responders and industry. 2) Identify other training opportunities and provide long-range training needs. This may include providing specialized training facilities, programs and or other applicable training initiatives.

Ultimately, the safety of responders and the public is the top priority of the subcommittee but educating all that may be affected with credible and reliable information is critical. We felt creating a working/teamwork relationship with the industry was the best avenue to accomplish this and determining what exploration & production companies were establishing a presence in Lycoming County was the first undertaking. We did this by registering online for a DEP e-notice. E-notice is an online email service that provides an email notification each time a permit is issued for a gas well within each respective county. Once notifications began to arrive, we proceeded to contact each E&P Company via website and open communications with their respective (EH&S) environmental, health & safety representative. Each company graciously and willing agreed to meet with the committee for a meet and greet session. With guidance from these companies, we were able to determine what the need was in reference to training and response to an incident. Training for first responders was "pushed out" as early as November 2008.

Through efforts of the County task force safety subcommittee, and relationships that had been forged with the industry referencing training of responders, the industry recognized the need to have local level and county emergency response/preparedness representation on the PIOGA/MSA Safety Sub-Committee. This was accomplished in December 2008.

In concert with training activities, our next task was to learn specifically where the activity and potential for incidents was going to take place. Should an incident occur, it is paramount that the responders know how to locate the site in an expedient fashion. We knew immediately that incorporating this industry into our already existing 911 addressing ordinance was that next essential step. Efforts to accomplish this started in September 2008, and by February 2009 the Lycoming County 911 addressing ordinance was amended by the County Commissioners to reflect well sites, compressor stations and impoundments.

To assist in educating the industry about such items as the 911 addressing ordinance the committee developed a procedures and recommendations manual to assist them in what the expectations are while operating in Lycoming County.

Examples of other recommendations are:

- 1) Emergency contact information relating to Lycoming County.
- 2) Satellite communication concerns due to the remote areas of these sites. Satellite communications may be the only option at many sites and dialing 911 on a satellite phone most times will take you to Texas or Arizona which causes delay in response. Our

County 911 center established a 10-digit emergency number that if dialed, will connect the caller directly to the Lycoming County 911 center.

3) Flaring/Blowdown log for tracking the companies when they notify the County of Lycoming 911 communication center via dial-up telephone / cell phone of any routine flaring or blow downs that may take place on gas well sites within Lycoming County. This information is then integrated into the County (GIS) Geographic Information System for multiple purposes, one being a venue in which local emergency response leadership can access via a secured site.

No one wants to see accidents happen, but we know they will occur. We also understand that in some cases the responders will take a support roll and not be a "Hot Zone" responder. How do we understand what level of response is needed to a particular incident and develop who and what resources and capabilities are needed. The development of the "Safety & Training Consortium" is our county's answer to this question. This consortium currently consists of 11 gas industry related companies, the counties hazardous materials response team and leadership of 3 county volunteer fire departments. The goal of the consortium is to develop a practical, reliable, and competent community emergency response capacity. To have an industry wide perspective of needed training that is a common good for all and explores industry expectations for the responder community. This group meets quarterly and also attends special projects meetings. Each meeting consists of a "Safety Moment" brought forth by one of the companies.

Consortium initiatives currently in progress.

1. "ABC of Gas Drilling", a training curriculum for first responders is now being developed by the Gas Taskforce Safety Committee, Safety & Training Consortium, PIOGA/MSC Safety Committee and the PA State Fire Academy.
2. Training Facility - A collaborated effort by Pennsylvania College of Technology, Lycoming County Department of Public Safety and PIOGA/MSC. The purpose of this initiative is to provide a facility to train emergency responders and industry personnel for gas field emergencies. For example, this facility will contain field activity areas with gas industry "props" such as gas rigs, tanks, separators, and a section of natural gas pipeline.

Funding is a concern for many when it comes to attending or providing training opportunities. The industry as a whole has stepped up to the challenge by contributions funding for many training opportunities that have been accomplished to date in Lycoming County. To date, industry has invested in excess \$110,000 to training responders in Lycoming County. A snapshot of these trainings is listed below.

Training opportunities to date:

1. November 2008 – Gas Well Symposium a general awareness / meet and greet session for gas companies and responders.
2. May 2009 – Crush Injury Seminar at Penn College with attendance by 120+ responders from 5 counties.

3. August 2009 - "Hazards Awareness of Gas Exploration, Drilling & Production" training program presented 10 times with 600 + attendees from multiple disciplines of emergency response.
4. September 2009- Full scale rig exercise with Range Resources involving 160+ emergency responders/gas company personnel and evaluators.
5. November 2009 – 5 individuals travel to Ohio for "Responding to Oilfield Emergencies Training" to evaluate training curriculum and facility.
6. March 2010 – Gas Well Education Day for state and federal level employees. In attendance were representatives of Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, PA State Fire Commissioners Office, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Department of Homeland Security and Labor & Industry.
7. August 2010 (scheduled) – Well Control Incident Management: Effective Strategies & Tactics for Municipal Responders. This class will be taught by Wild Well Control of Houston, TX.

The safety committee and the consortium continually strive to provide responders with the knowledge, tools and abilities to respond to or assist with an incident should it happen. Through these efforts there have been additional tools developed and put in the responder's hands to better prepare them for response. Response algorithms, terminology cards and a response checklist are a few techniques we've used. The committee and County GIS are also working to use technology to its advantage such as a pre-determined evacuation route of an addressed site. This can be accomplished via a model that puts a user-selected distance into the model and creates polygon buffers around either all the wells or just the selected wells in Lycoming County. From these newly created polygons, we can quickly determine the number of structures within the polygon and/or the road segments within the polygon. Using these GIS spatial analysis tools will allow us to be proactive in our planning for gas well emergencies.

Currently, Lycoming County has 80+ addressed wells and that number is growing monthly with predictions of 3,000 to 5,000 in next 20 years. The exploration, drilling and production of natural gas will potentially affect our lives for generations to come. The need to create and maintain an arena and avenue of learning and training for the emergency response community will only increase. The success of this effort will rely much on industry and government leadership.

Several recommendations offered by the committee indicate the need for counties to establish a 911 address for sites, compressor stations and impoundments. The value of attaching an address to a confirmed location for responders to go to is invaluable. The other is establishing a consortium or committee at county, regional and state level with the industry to develop communications, open discussion and serve as a conduit between those that are experts in their field and the responder community.

Thank you for your time and interest in this matter. We believe that cohesiveness between industry and the response community will continue to make Pennsylvania a safe place to work and live.