

**Statement for the
Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee
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OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER

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Fire Commissioner

Senator Baker, Senator Farnese, and members of the committee I want to thank you for providing me with an opportunity to discuss emergency response to incidents related to the *Marcellus Shale Gas* industry here in Pennsylvania.

As you know my office is responsible to ensure training opportunities are made available to the fire service across the Commonwealth. Through the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy these opportunities are provided through our Local Level Delivery System, Resident Programs and Academy on the Road.

While the recent issues related to the Commonwealths budget have caused me to reduce training programs offered at the State Fire Academy and cease providing training through our Academy on the Road Program, our Local Level Delivery System seems to be doing fairly well due to the cooperation of the Community Colleges and the county operated fire training centers.

There are currently 140 different courses available through the Local Level Training System that range from 1.5 hours to 60 hours in length. The subjects range from hazardous materials awareness refresher training to interior firefighting and everything in between. While these courses are available and in many cases free of charge or at a very low cost, it must be noted there are no state statutes requiring any firefighter or officer to attend any of these training programs.

While none of the current courses specially address incidents at a gas well site many of the courses currently offered would provide the basic training needed to safely respond to an incident at a gas well site.

On March 30th of 2010 while attending a Marcellus Gas Training session hosted by the Lycoming County Emergency Management Office and the Marcellus Shale Safety Coalition, I was approached by Ralph Tijerina from Range Resources who was representing the Marcellus Shale Safety Committee. Mr. Tijerina asked about our office collaborating with the gas industry to develop training programs for first responders. While I was very interested in creating a partnership with the gas industry, I explained that due to budget issues that were affecting state agencies, the gas industry would have to be willing to offset the cost associated with the development of the curriculum and ultimately the delivery of the training. Ralph indicated he felt there would be no issue with the gas industry defraying the cost.

I met with our Fire Academy Administrator and Assistant Administrator the following week and explained what we needed to accomplish. With the Assistance of Craig Konkle from Lycoming County, the three of us met with safety representatives from the gas industry on April 29th to discuss the curriculum, delivery of the curriculum, and the potential cost for the programs. On June 12th Gary Fulton, Fire Academy Assistant Administrator met with the Marcellus Shale Safety Committee and finalized a timeframe in which the first programs would be ready for delivery. As it stands now, the first

train the trainers will be conducted in August and the first of the new classes will be delivered in September.

While my office did not become involved with Marcellus Shale Gas training until March of 2010, the gas industry, through their safety personnel, have been delivering "familiarization" level training upon the request of local government or fire officials for at least the last 2 years. They will continue to offer the training until the Fire Academy begins delivery of the training this fall.

This training provides the basic level needed to ensure the safety of those called upon to respond to an incident on or off site of a gas well field. While the training highlights what to do during an incident, it also highlights what not to do. While I cannot promise you that every fire department who might be called to respond to an emergency related to the Marcellus Shale industry has received the training, I feel pretty confident that those who have taken advantage of the training offered to date have sufficient knowledge to safely respond to an incident ensuring that "Everyone Goes Home"™.

Additionally, Lycoming County in cooperation with the industry is offering a one day training program on three different dates -- August 7, 8, and 9. This training is free of charge and will be in the Lycoming County Area. The program is intended to prepare tactical response agencies with local jurisdiction over *oil or gas emergencies to better manage* their incident scenes, integrate resources and work more effectively with oil and gas operators and well control specialist. I am working with the gas industry to transition this training program and make it available in other venues across the Commonwealth.

While many of Pennsylvania's Fire Department may have very well trained firefighters and officers, I must also make it clear that there are no fire departments within this Commonwealth who have the tools, equipment and training to deal with every possible Marcellus Shale incident that could occur. For example, extinguishing a fire involving high pressure gas will require specialized teams with specialized equipment. Some of our fire departments would not have the equipment or training necessary to

perform a high angle rescue from a drilling rig while others may not have the rescue tools needed to provide extrication from an accident involving a large vehicle. These same circumstances also apply to incidents that have nothing to do with the gas industry. In these cases, the fire department must know where those resources are and how to request them. These potential gaps should become apparent to fire departments when the training is conducted and they have a better understanding of what potential emergencies they could be called to respond. Identifying these resource or response gaps before the emergency is crucial. By having knowledge of such gaps local fire departments can then work with the county Emergency Management Agency to develop a local plan for a response to a Marcellus Shale related emergency.

In addition, this planning would also identify any gaps within a county and would enable the county to identify the need for any specialized training, tools or equipment that would be needed to mitigate the incident. Identifying any gaps would enable first responders, local government officials, local and county emergency management officials to identify where the special equipment could be drawn from using the intrastate mutual aid system that was created with Act 93 of 2008.

I must also point out that many of our fire departments are dealing with many issues that may keep them from attending this training or any other training for that matter. Many of our volunteer departments are struggling financially which causes them to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to raise funds and in many cases this effort is being made with fewer and fewer people. There may be instances where the leadership feels the training is not necessary and the personnel from that particular fire department will not attend the training even though they may have several of these Marcellus Shale wells within their first response areas. Progressive departments will seek out and take advantage of this training. For those that won't, there could be problems. Although I have no statutory authority to

mandate training to any first responder, I can assure this committee that any department that wants this training will be provided the opportunity to attend this training.

I believe with the continued cooperation of the Marcellus Shale Coalition, Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association (PIOGA) state and local government officials, and first responders we can further enhance an emergency response program related to incidents involving Marcellus Shale gas well drilling that will continue to provide the necessary protection for our citizens in those areas.

Again thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.