

Testimony
By
Senator Gene Yaw
Before the Senate of Veteran's Affairs and Emergency
Preparedness Committee

Chairman Baker and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss emergency preparedness as it relates to the gas industry in Pennsylvania. It is indeed a somewhat different perspective to participate in these proceedings from this side of the room.

I have been fortunate enough to have been involved from the very early stages of the developing gas industry in Pennsylvania. The specific matter of inquiry before the Committee is emergency preparedness. In my layman's experience this involves planning, education and communication. As you know, I represent Lycoming, Bradford and Sullivan Counties and parts of Union and Susquehanna Counties.

In Lycoming County, the county commissioners formed the Lycoming County Gas Exploration Task Force in early 2008. This was the first such organization in the state and recently received the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. The precepts of planning, education and communication run through the activities of the Task Force. The intent was to create a broad based organization with a diverse background of interests.

The purpose of the Task Force is to learn how various segments of our local economy and our living environment can deal with the changes which result, or may be expected to result, from the developing gas industry. The Task Force is not a super approval or review agency. The Task Force is comprised of approximately fifteen (15) members. Among the membership are realtors, bankers, township supervisors, members of the planning commission, a member of city council, the County Planner, legislators, representatives of DEP, a school superintendent, the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the county commissioners. The Task

Force is further made up of subcommittees with chairs chosen from the membership to inquire into such areas as law and public policy, education, planning and public safety. Membership in these subcommittees is not limited to those on the Task Force itself. I am chair of the Law and Public Policy Subcommittee. On this Committee I have included an attorney, a member of the County Planning Commission, a township supervisor, the County Planner and a representative of the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office. Again, the objective is to have a broad and diverse source of information.

Organizationally, the Task Force meets for one (1) hour monthly in the county commissioner's conference room in recognition of the time constraints which the members face. About one half of each meeting is devoted to a presentation by some business or regulatory agency associated with the gas industry. Examples of organizations which have appeared are Chief Oil and Gas, Chesapeake Oil and Gas, Range Resources, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, Norfolk Southern Railroad, Chief Oil and Gas Gathering Lines, SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority, Public Utility Commission and Excalibur Trucking to name just a few.

I have been a member of the Task Force, first in my former position as a county solicitor and now as a member of the legislature. The Task Force has been valuable to me in gaining an understanding of the gas industry and its impact on my Senate District, as well as Pennsylvania in general.

Shortly after being organized, it became apparent that knowing the location of well sites was a significant issue for emergency responders. Lycoming County has a mandatory addressing ordinance which was developed more than ten (10) years ago in accordance with the United States Postal System Addressing Program. With input from the Task Force, the county commissioners amended the County Ordinance to require that each well pad obtain a specific postal address. This information then becomes a part of the County 911 system so that the proper first responders can be dispatched to a site without delay or guess work.

As the result of a recent meeting with a pipeline contractor, it was brought to my attention that helicopter landing sites will be located at intervals along the

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proposed pipeline. This is a fact which we intend to investigate and possibly incorporate into the County's emergency response information.

I was a prime sponsor of Senate Bill 297, a bill which Senator Baker cosponsored. This bill, now Act 15 of 2010, reduces the non-disclosure period for Marcellus Shale well production information which is provided to DEP from a five (5) year non-disclosure period to six (6) months. Again, the basic thoughts for the legislation had their genesis in Task Force discussions.

I would like to mention one other undertaking which arose out of the Lycoming County Task Force. Craig Konkle is the Lycoming County Emergency Management training/public education supervisor and a member of the Task Force. In the Fall of 2009, Craig developed an emergency responders exercise which was conducted with the cooperation and financial support of Range Resources. The exercise simulated several emergency situations on a drilling rig which Range shut down for the purpose of the exercise. Approximately 125 emergency responders from eight (8) volunteer fire departments participated along with their equipment. I made a video of the exercise and then provided a copy to every fire department in the senatorial district. This video is currently posted on DEP's website on the Marcellus Shale page under Emergency Responder Training Exercise.

I mention those few areas in which I have been involved to illustrate what can be done when there is planning, education and communication among the respective players. We have heard many times that prior planning prevents poor performance. I must say, however, that my experience is that the most important aspect of emergency preparedness could very well be communication.

I thank you for your attention and I look forward to your thoughts and questions.