

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Winner 2009 [PAEE Business Partner](#) Of The Year Award

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Gov. Corbett's Statement On Greene County Natural Gas Well Explosion

Gov. Corbett received an update Friday from the Department of Environmental Protection on the status of the [gas well fire in Greene County](#) and subsequently released the following statement:

“Our focus right now is making sure workers and first responders are safe, and we are concerned about the potential loss of life,” said Corbett. “Yesterday, I directed Secretary of Department of Environmental Protection Chris Abruzzo and other executive level DEP staff to get to the site and assist authorities in managing this incident. State authorities have also been in touch with the company to work together and resolve immediate needs. I have also directed Secretary Abruzzo to work with the appropriate state, county and local authorities and create a multi-agency investigation after this incident concludes. We need to determine exactly what happened and how we can learn from it.”

The governor reiterated his commitment to continuing to work with the General Assembly on enhancing safety standards for both residents and workers. In 2012, Governor Corbett signed Act 9, the Unconventional Well 911 Emergency Response Act. This Act requires operators to maintain a unique GPS coordinate address at each well site, as well as develop an emergency response plan to be kept on file with DEP, PEMA and the county emergency management agency.

Gas Well Fire Demonstrates Need For School Setback

[Marcellus Outreach Butler](#) Wednesday called for natural gas drilling and gas related infrastructure to be kept at least one mile away from schools.

The gas well explosion and fire that began February 11 near Dunkard, Greene County, which injured one worker and left another missing, feared dead, prompted the State Police to set a half-mile perimeter around the burning well.

The fire couldn't be approached closer than 300 yards due to its intensity, yet in Butler County a well exists approximately 300 yards from Summit Elementary School. A well will be about 1,900 feet from Connoquenessing Elementary School and a well is planned close to Moraine Elementary School.

The school districts to which these schools belong themselves have either leased or are

considering leasing and they are not the only school districts that throw caution away to shore up their budgets with gas industry money.

What are the risks? The Greene County explosion was not the first gas well explosion in Pennsylvania.

A gas well explosion and fire on February 23, 2010 injured 3 workers in Avella, Washington County. On June 3, 2010 in Clearfield County a natural gas well blowout allowed natural gas and flowback fluid to spew uncontrollably on the ground and shoot 75 feet into the air, as campers in the Moshannon State Forest were evacuated.

Several well fires have occurred in the Marcellus Shale play over the last few years.

A well explosion and fire near New Milton, WV on July 7, 2013 in which 2 of the 8 workers injured subsequently died. On September 21, 2013, residents of Kent, WV were evacuated when a processing plant exploded.

Blowouts and fires of unconventional wells and infrastructure have occurred in other shale plays beyond the Marcellus Shale area.

Although not frequent occurrences, well fires are a risk that comes with this industrial process involving dangerous chemicals and highly volatile methane gas. If an explosion similar to the one in Greene County happened next to a school, the consequences could be devastating.

A [report by PennEnvironment](#) found that in a 5-state region, permitted fracking well sites are found within one mile of 223 schools.

We demand that legislators and regulators do the right thing and take action to “protect our children.”

For more information, visit the [Marcellus Outreach Butler](#) website.

NewsClips:

[2 Chevron Gas Wells Burning In Greene County](#)

[Gas Well Fire May Burn Through Weekend](#)

[Chevron Takes Over Polish Club To Handle Gas Well Fire](#)

[DEP Secretary On Scene Of Greene County Gas Well Fire](#)

[Crews Remove Charred Equipment, Vehicles From Well Fire](#)

[One Of Two Greene Well Fires Still Burning, Worker Missing](#)

[One Missing, One Hurt In Greene County Gas Well Explosion](#)

[Gas Wells Explodes In Southwest PA](#)

[Gas Well Fire Sparked By Crew Connecting Well To Pipeline](#)

[Vandergrift Derailment Fans Fears Over Oil Shipments](#)

[Railroad Ups Estimate Of Oil Spilled In Vandergrift Derailment](#)

[Federal Agency To Probe Freight Train Derailment In Vandergrift](#)

[Op-Ed: Danger On The Rails Running Thru Pittsburgh](#)