

Pam Judy's Story: Compressor Station Emissions

I wanted to share with you a letter written by Pam Judy (of Greene County, Pa) about her family's experiences with a compressor station that was built near their new home. She presented her letter to Murrysville, Pa council during one of their public hearings.

Pam Judy's July 20, 2011 letter:

Dear Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my family's personal story as it relates to various health issues we have been experiencing after a Marcellus Shale compressor station was built near our home.

My name is Pam Judy. I am a resident of Carmichaels in Greene County.

In April 2006 we built a new home on property originally belonging to great grandparents and a part of the family farm. For three years my family enjoyed the peace and quiet of living in the country. However, in the spring of 2009, that quiet way of life abruptly came to an end when a compressor station was built 780 feet from our home on an adjoining landowner's property.

Due to the noise and the fumes from the engines and dehydration unit that settle in our yard we can no longer spend time outdoors. Shortly after operations began, we started to experience extreme headaches, runny noses, sore/scratchy throats, muscle aches and a constant feeling of fatigue. Both of our children are experiencing nose bleeds and I've had dizziness, vomiting and vertigo to the point that I couldn't stand and was taken to an emergency room. Our daughter has commented that she feels as though she has cement in her bones.

In November of last year our son was out on our property scouting for deer in preparation for the opening day of the season. Some of these areas were in close proximity to the compressor site. Within one day of being out, he developed blisters in his mouth and throat, had extreme difficulty swallowing, and on Thanksgiving morning he went to the emergency room of a nearby hospital.

After conducting research regarding possible emissions from facilities such as this, and the associated illnesses, I contacted Calvin Tillman, Mayor of Dish Texas. Dish residents had experienced a similar problem a few years ago when drilling was done into the Barnett Shale. Mayor Tillman provided me with a list of blood and urine tests which could be done to determine exposure. In May 2010 I had those tests performed and the results revealed my body contained measurable levels of benzene and phenol.

This prompted me to become even more vigilant in determining what we were being exposed to. In June 2010, I was able to convince the PA DEP to conduct an air quality study which focused on concentrations of volatile organic compounds typically found in petroleum products. The study consisted of a 24 hour canister air sampling in my yard and 4 days of monitoring at the site where an infrared camera was used.

The results of the 24 hour canister sampling revealed 16 chemicals including benzene, styrene, toluene, xylene, hexane, heptane, acetone, acrolein, propene, carbon tetrachloride and chloromethane to name a few.

Most, if not all, of the aforementioned compounds are known carcinogens and, if exposed, carry with them the very symptoms my family and I have been experiencing. Benzene has been directly linked to various blood cancers including leukemia and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

In November 2010 the DEP released their final report regarding findings at this site as well as four additional locations. That report states the department could find no emission levels that would constitute a concern to the health of residents living near Marcellus operations and that the sampling results were used to characterize the acute non-cancer health risks associated with industry emissions. The report further states that they did not address the cumulative or long-term impact of air emissions or the lifetime cancer risks because this was a short-term study.

Given the health issues we have been experiencing since this facility began operations, I am extremely concerned that as a result of prolonged exposure to the previously mentioned chemicals, we will develop even

more serious health issues including cancer. Yet this report focused on the non-cancerous health risks.

As the Marcellus industry continues to grow so does the number of compressor sites required. With every compressor site comes increased atmospheric hydrocarbon emissions that will, in my opinion, and in the opinion of former DEP Secretary John Hanger, have a huge cumulative impact on air quality in PA.

As a local governing body you have the authority to impose restrictions on companies wanting to do business in your community. I would implore you to exercise that authority and establish set-backs so that compressor sites cannot be built 780 feet from a residence. I realize that such facilities are a necessary evil of this industry. However, they should be built in more desolate areas with the least amount of impact.

I have likened the Marcellus industry to that of the asbestos industry years ago. Both our government, and the asbestos industry, through very elaborate public relations schemes led us to believe there was no harm in being exposed to asbestos. Only to find out years later the true cancer risks. I truly believe we could be facing a similar situation as a result of the Marcellus industry. And for those of who have been exposed it could be too late.

For this reason, I would ask that you take every precaution to protect the residents of your community. It is your duty as elected officials to insure their welfare and safety. A charge you should not take lightly.