

### TCEQ Barnett Shale Gas Well Air Tests in Ft. Worth Find "No Cause for Concern"

John Sadlier, Deputy Director, Office of Compliance and Enforcement, of the Texas Commission On Environmental Quality (TCEQ) told the Fort Worth City Council, during a Briefing on Environmental Impacts of Gas Drilling on January 12 that an intensive three-day TCEQ air monitoring effort in Ft. Worth the week of December 14 surveyed more than a hundred natural gas production facilities within the city limits for potentially dangerous air emissions, and found no pollutants at levels that would be a cause for concern.

No benzene was found in any of the air samples.

"In fact, the majority of the testing during that trip found no detection of volatile organic compounds at all," said the TCEQ's John Sadlier. "At the sites where our monitoring staff detected odors, or our instruments detected the possible presence of VOCs, we collected more sensitive air canister samples. When analyzed, these samples showed either non-detection or levels of VOCs below levels which would cause any short-term or long-term health concerns. Benzene was among the 22 VOCs (volatile organic compounds) tested for. "

**The teams surveyed 126 natural gas production sites that ranged from drilling and fracturing processing sites to disposal sites to compressor facilities.**

"This study was undertaken in response to concerns from citizens in the North Texas area," said TCEQ Executive Director Mark Vickery. "Our agency is committed to protecting the health of the people of Texas. While we did not document any dangerous ambient air pollution during this study in Ft. Worth, we will continue to perform additional studies and monitoring in the area of the Barnett Shale."

**Three teams of experienced monitoring staff fanned out over Ft. Worth equipped with infrared cameras that detect VOC emissions invisible to the naked eye, hand-held sniffers called toxic vapor analyzers, and air sampling canisters that were used to take samples when any of the instruments detected potential emissions or the staff detected strong odors. The sites surveyed were selected by a combination of factors, including facility types, proximity of the site to residences, and size of the facility. All samples were collected off site, using standard monitoring protocols taking into account wind direction and other atmospheric conditions.**

**The TCEQ will continue to respond to citizen complaints concerning oil and gas facilities and has modified internal guidance to provide quicker response times to complaints. Large scale, more in-depth air quality studies covering a much larger area of the Barnett Shale formation have been conducted, and results are expected in mid-January.**

The *Briefing on Environmental Impacts of Gas Drilling* before the Fort Worth City Pre-Council Meeting began with a slide presentation by Fernando Costa, Assistant City Manager, City of Fort Worth, which outlined the *Briefing on Environmental Impacts of Gas Drilling* presentations beginning with Costa's, followed by *John Sadlier's Recent Air Quality Testing Results* and the new *Complaint and Investigation Procedures*, then a report by Brian Boerner, Environmental Management Director, City of Fort Worth on Water Quality Impacts. Questions and answers by the Fort Worth City Council members then followed. More tests will be scheduled in the future in Fort Worth and the surrounding communities. Councilman Carter Burdette requested John Sadlier of the TCEQ to also run TCEQ tests on other potential sources of pollutants in Fort Worth especially those that arise when filling our cars with gasoline. He said he would have some of those tests run in the future.

The response to the TCEQ test results showing zero benzene and no pollutants exceeding state or federal levels (or even near them) found anywhere in any of the test results that had been scaring people in Fort Worth was a huge sigh relief by both residents and local elected officials.

#### Railroad Commissioners Discuss Barnett Shale Air Quality Tests

The year's first open meeting of the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) was held Tuesday, January 12, 2010, beginning at 9:30 a.m. The first items on the agenda were two issues regarding emissions from oil and gas operations in the Barnett Shale gas trend of North Texas. **This meeting was held hours before the announcement of the test results at 126 sites in Fort Worth which showed no air pollution from Barnett Shale wells or activities.**

Commissioner Elizabeth Ames Jones requested that the RRC staff look into ways that the RRC can work more in sync with other state agencies such as the TCEQ and cities with inspectors, like Fort Worth, in the inspection of wells. She said she had confidence in the RRC process, and look forward to working closely with the TCEQ, providing their expertise, to ensure that Barnett Shale gas is drilled, produced, and delivered to market in the safest and cleanest way possible. She was against sending any request to the Attorney General of Texas requesting an opinion on the authority of the Railroad Commission on any type of moratorium concerning the Barnett Shale.

Chairman Carrillo was also adamant about not voting for the RRC Agenda Item 238 submitted by RRC Commissioner Williams: *Request for an Attorney General opinion regarding the authority of the Railroad Commission to declare a moratorium on the issuance of drilling permits in the Barnett Shale gas trend.* The vote on that item failed and Chairman Carrillo told us that agreed to call Representative Burnam as well as write him with the news.

Dish Mayor Calvin Tillman made a short statement before the Commissioners alleging that "Barnett Shale development has led to "toxic air" and that it is his belief "that each of these

companies as well as the regulatory bodies over them are fully aware of what toxins are emitted from these facilities and attempted to hide this.” He said he joins Fort Worth Democratic Representative Lon Burnam in urging the RRC to impose a seven county drilling moratorium for **at least one year on Barnett Shale natural gas drilling**. He claimed not to be a “radical, anti-drilling environmentalist.” Tillman bases his claim, in part, on a study performed by a private firm (Wolf Eagle Environmental Engineers & Consultants, LLC) hired by the city. Wolf Eagle found some elevated levels of benzene, among other volatile organic compounds (VOCs). He was questioned at length by Chairman Carrillo concerning Wolf Eagle and the extent of their professional engineers and experience. The Chairman then read to Tillman a short summary of the analysis of a Wolf Eagle report by an engineering firm retained by the City of Fort Worth which greatly criticized the professionalism of Wolf Eagle in their sampling, study and analysis of air pollution.

Chairman Carrillo then asked Tillman if he was aware that the TCEQ had been requested to investigate the possibility that Clark Airfield in Clark (not named Dish) had been used as a base for crop dusters beginning in the 1970’s. Tillman said he was not aware of that and little air traffic was occurring now but he did not move there until about 2003. The Chairman then asked him if the TCEQ found contaminants that were causing air pollution other than related to oil and gas operations if he would believe the results. Tillman answered no.

Later, on January 13, 2010, at 5:00 p.m. Chairman Carrillo issued a statement on Barnett Shale Air Emissions Issues, which read in part:

“The testimony came on the same day that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) released a statement that a recent three-day sampling of 126 natural gas production sites near Fort Worth found “No Cause for Concern” related to Barnett Shale exploration and production activities. The TCEQ report noted: “In fact, the majority of the testing during that trip found no detection of volatile organic compounds at all,” said TCEQ’s John Sadlier, Deputy Director of the Office of Compliance and Enforcement. “At the sites where our monitoring staff detected odors, or our instruments detected the possible presence of VOCs, we collected more sensitive air canister samples. When analyzed, these samples showed either non-detection or levels of VOCs below levels which would cause any short-term or long-term health concerns.” Benzene was among the 22 VOCs for which the air tests were conducted.

**This underscores my comments that practical, common sense solutions are needed to protect the public health but without crippling our Texas economy. Reactionary policy could have a devastating effect on Barnett Shale development that has been critically important to the Texas economy, jobs, and domestic energy security. Like most Texans, when I first heard about the preliminary air emission reports, that we may have elevated levels of certain VOC’s like benzene, I was concerned.**

**However, I also understood that we were a long way from having enough scientific data to definitively determine the exact source and levels of these compounds. We are just now beginning to collect sufficient data from impartial, non-biased sources to accurately assess the emission and exposure levels in the communities within the Barnett Shale.**

**Since 1982, the Texas Legislature put in place a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the RRC and TCEQ delineating our respective areas of jurisdiction and responsibilities.**

The two state agencies are already working together, along with local communities like Fort Worth to address these important concerns. TCEQ Chairman Shaw and I have agreed that both state agencies should continue to coordinate and cooperate on this and other areas of concern. While the final answer is not in on this, the recent TCEQ air emission report goes a long way in helping Texans better understand the issue. We will continue to remain engaged, to participate in relevant meetings, and to monitor the overall situation. We understand that TCEQ will soon install a continuous air monitoring station in the Barnett Shale area to further monitor the situation.

Texas remains the premier energy producing state in the nation, producing over seven trillion cubic feet of natural gas in calendar year 2009 - the most, by far, of any other state. The Barnett Shale trend now produces in 23 north-central Texas counties around Fort Worth and is the largest urban drilling environment in the world. As of December 2009, approximately 14,000 producing wells have been drilled in the trend and over 6 trillion cubic feet of clean-burning natural gas have been produced from 2000-2009 alone. Today, the Barnett Shale contributes over 25% of total Texas natural gas production. In an economic impact report a few years ago, it was estimated that the Barnett Shale would contribute 100,000 jobs and multiple billions of dollars to the Texas economy. Put another way, projections have estimated that between 2001 and 2015 the Barnett Shale will contribute \$100 billion dollars in output and one million person-years of employment at the very time when Texas and our nation most need jobs, economic development and domestic energy security.

This is a vitally important issue to Texas. Not only from a public health standpoint but also from an economic standpoint with tens of thousands of jobs at stake. Therefore solutions need to be based on scientific facts gathered and analyzed by independent bodies, not conjecture and accusations. TCEQ's efforts will not stop with this study and they will continue their monitoring and collection effort.

The Railroad Commission will continue to play an active role in the ongoing discussions with both state and local officials. An outright drilling moratorium as suggested by Democratic Representative Lon Burnam, based on the facts we have in hand to date, would be a drastic overreaction to this issue and would negatively impact Texas."

Railroad Commission Chairman Victor Carrillo, a native of Abilene, Texas, joined the Texas Railroad Commission in February 2003. In 2004, he won his first statewide election with almost four million votes and secured a six-year term of office through 2010. He has worked as a geologist, geophysicist, college professor, attorney, Abilene City Council and judge. He currently is seeking re-election to the Railroad Commission.

If you wish to see the first part of the Railroad Commission of Texas meeting concerning the two Barnett Shale issues, hear Mayor Tillman's statement then hear Chairman Carrillo question him then you can on your computer by clicking on: [http://www.texasadmin.com/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi?location=txrail&savefile=RRC\\_OC011210](http://www.texasadmin.com/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi?location=txrail&savefile=RRC_OC011210) and then clicking on [view discussion of item 17] 44 minutes. You can also send this clip to friends to view at this site.