

# WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA

## How Fracking Affects Your Health

The **Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project** is a non-profit public health organization that supports residents of southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond who believe their health has been, or could be, impacted by fracking. We know people need information and help now!

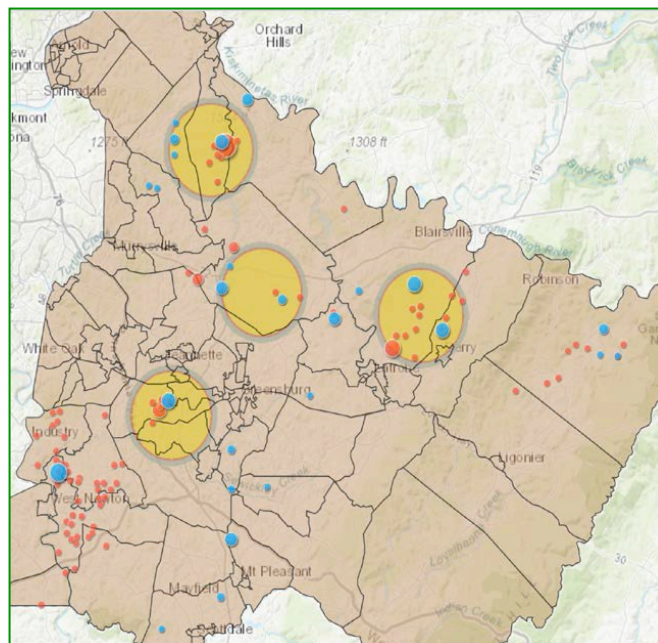
### The scope of fracking in Westmoreland County is extensive – and growing

- Shale gas activities are located in 19 municipalities (boroughs and townships)
- There are 143 shale gas facilities, with 113 facilities in the western half of the county
- These facilities include Marcellus shale well pads, processing stations, and compressor stations (used to move gas through pipelines)
- Each facility may have multiple sources of emissions releasing pollutants into the air, water, or soil

### Fracking operations in Westmoreland County emit large amounts of pollutants

- In 2017, shale gas sources in Westmoreland County emitted more than 3,600 tons of pollutants into the air – the equivalent of more than 500 extra cars on the road
- Emissions from pipelines, storage facilities, and diesel truck traffic add more pollutants
- These pollutants can enter your body when you breathe, drink water, or eat food grown nearby, or you can absorb them through your skin

Areas impacted include the townships of Bell, Derry, East Huntingdon, Fairfield, Hempfield, Ligonier, Loyalhanna, Mount Pleasant, Penn, Rostraver, Saint Clair, Salem, Sewickley, South Huntingdon, Unity, and Washington, and the boroughs of Lower Burrell, Murrysville, and West Newton.



### Exposure to pollutants can lead to health problems

- Pollutants released into the air may affect people living up to three miles from a source
- Exposure can lead to a host of health issues, including skin rashes, headaches and nausea, asthma, stress, anxiety, depression, birth defects, low-birth-weight babies, and cancer
- People at higher risk – such as children, elderly persons, and the chronically ill – may be impacted more severely than healthy adults
- Oftentimes, a symptom may not begin with the exposure but will be aggravated by it, as in the case of worsening asthma

## Your exposure to pollutants can be affected by a number of factors

- Exposure to pollutants can occur both indoors and outdoors
- Most pollutants aren't visible and don't have an odor, so you may not even know they're present
- Exposure can be affected by your location in relation to the source, the number of sources present, the intensity of exposure, and the kind of exposure experienced
- Local weather conditions (wind speed and direction, cloud cover, etc.) can affect exposure
- Exposure can increase while exercising or working outside
- Exposures may also be highest at night when there's little or no wind and the air is settling
- If you live in a mountain valley or at the base of a hill, your exposure may be double that of people living at or near the top of the same mountain or hill

## What can you do to reduce the risk of exposure?

Here are some measures you can take to reduce the risk of exposure to you or your family:

- Have an EHP public health nurse visit you (call 724-260-5504) or come in for a complimentary health assessment
- Request free air or water monitoring equipment from EHP
- Register your health effects (see our website)
- Place a HEPA-certified air filter in your home
- Remove avoidable indoor air pollutants such as harmful cleaning products, cigarette smoke, etc.
- Keep surfaces clean of dust and dirt
- Pay attention to the weather – stay inside when conditions for exposure are high
- Find an alternative water source if you have serious concerns about the quality of your well water
- See your health care provider for a full health checkup
- Keep a health diary to track patterns in your health and the factors that might affect it
- Encourage your community to perform a Health Impact Assessment (see our website)
- Urge your child's school to cancel or reduce outdoor activities if pollution episodes occur
- Educate yourself about emergency plans for your school and community in the event of an explosion or sudden release of toxins, and report unusual activity to authorities
- Contact your local government representatives to demand better monitoring and regulations that protect your health

Join the Health Effects Registry



**Contact us for more information about how you and your family  
can take action to reduce exposures to fracking pollutants.**

SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**  
PROJECT

2001 Waterdam Plaza, Suite 201, McMurray, PA 15317  
info@environmentalhealthproject.org  
[www.environmentalhealthproject.org](http://www.environmentalhealthproject.org)  
724.260.5504