

PADEP Releases Latest Air Sampling Results near Marcellus Shale Operations

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) recently released a report summarizing the short-term, ambient air sampling program conducted near Marcellus natural gas operations in north central Pennsylvania. This is the third such report as the PADEP conducted similar sampling in southwest and northeast Pennsylvania. For this study, PADEP conducted ambient air sampling in Bradford, Lycoming and Tioga counties and background air sampling in Sullivan County. The PADEP used two Mobile Analytical Unit sampling vehicles in addition to sampling canisters to measure concentrations of pollutants associated with natural gas development activities. Sampling was conducted from August through December 2010 near two compressor stations, a well site during flaring operations and an active well-drilling site as well as a background site. Goals of the sampling effort include short-term screening of target air pollutants, assessing preliminary air quality impacts and determining if there are any immediate health risks associated with measured pollutant levels to nearby residents.

The sampling program detected certain constituents of natural gas, including methane, in the air near Marcellus Shale operations. Also, certain compounds, mainly methyl mercaptan, were detected at levels which generally produce odors. However, the sampling program did not identify concentrations of any compounds that would be of concern to the health of residents living and working near these operations. PADEP plans to compare the results from the regional sampling programs and determine whether additional, longer-term sampling is warranted. The report can be viewed at:

http://files.dep.state.pa.us/RegionalResources/NCRO/NCROPortalFiles/NCMarcellusAirSamplingStudy_Final_5_6_11.pdf