

STATE SENATOR
LISA BAKER
20TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

✓ 172 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
SENATE BOX 203020
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3020
717-787-7428
FAX: 717-787-9242

22 DALLAS SHOPPING CENTER
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
DALLAS, PA 18612
570-675-3931
FAX: 570-820-4848
TOLL FREE: 1-888-736-1153

lbaker@psen.gov
senatorbaker.com



Senate of Pennsylvania

VETERANS AFFAIRS & EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, CHAIR
COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY,
VICE CHAIR
AGING & YOUTH
APPROPRIATIONS
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES &
ENERGY
PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE

October 1, 2009

The Honorable John Hanger
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
16th Floor, Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063

COPY

Dear Secretary Hanger:

Citizens rightfully expect swift action by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) when things go wrong. When Cabot Oil and Gas experienced three liquid-gel spills in less than one week, residents of Dimock Township, Susquehanna County and the region were understandably concerned about DEP's ability to address this situation.

Having an incident of this nature so early in the process tends to confirm fears of worse to come. People are concerned this is just the first of the problems to be experienced as Marcellus Shale drilling becomes more widespread. The purpose is not to criticize. The department's response so far has been appropriate. The ordered shutdown of gas well fracking operations is necessary to determine the reasons for these incidents. Revisions to Cabot's Pollution Prevention and Contingency Plan, Control and Disposal Plan and a comprehensive engineering study will help to prevent spills from occurring in the future.

Rather, I want to convey community concerns and describe the test your agency appears to confront. The spills in Dimock polluted wetlands and caused a major fish kill in Stevens Creek. This raises questions about how the spills will be contained to prevent further contamination and whether existing drilling requirements are sufficient.

Because of reports about program cuts and personnel reductions in the emerging state budget and the impact it may have on regulatory functions, there is a belief that taxpayers, property owners, and local communities will be stuck with the costs when something goes wrong. So it is important to inform the public as to how financial responsibility for fixing these problems is assigned.

Health and safety must be our primary concerns with regard to natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania. The problem in Dimock is a crucial test of what capacity the state has, and how we will respond to protect our citizens. Clarifying these issues as this process continues would be helpful for public understanding. To the extent the people can be assured this sort of spill is unusual, that will be helpful in building public confidence in the permitting and oversight capability of DEP.

Thank you for your attention to this troubling situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Baker".

Lisa J. Baker
Senator

LJB/elc