

BILL SUMMARY
Senate Bill 995, Printer's No. 1102
Prime Sponsor: Baker

SUMMARY:

This legislation would require the posting of emergency response information at all oil and gas well sites. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would be required to adopt emergency regulations to implement the following requirements: the address of the well would have to be registered with PEMA, DEP and the county and local emergency management organization; operators would be required to develop an emergency response plan; and operators would be required to file that plan with PEMA, DEP and the county and local emergency management agency. Operators would also be required to post a sign at each wellsite, bearing the address of the site, the emergency contact information for the operator, and any other information deemed necessary by PEMA or DEP.

EXISTING LAW:

This bill amends Title 35 (Health and Safety). Operators are currently not required to share their emergency response plans with local agencies, who are responsible for responding to any form of fire, leak, medical crisis, or other emergency. The Marcellus Shale Coalition has urged its members to adopt this information-sharing as a “best management practice.”

ANALYSIS:

Local first responders and emergency management officials have expressed concern that it may be difficult for them to find well sites should an emergency occur, such as a blowout, fire, spill or crushing injury, particularly in vast, undeveloped regions. Currently, well operators are encouraged but not required to report their latitude and longitude to the Departments of Environmental Protection and Labor and Industry, but they are not required to share those addresses with local first responders or the county Emergency Management Agency, which is charged with processing all 911 calls. The industry is encouraging voluntary compliance.

- Amendment A02317 (Baker) will clarify that emergency information must be posted at both the well pad site and access road entrance; that emergency plans must be submitted to the county emergency management agency; and that the bill's provisions govern both new and existing well sites.

EFFECTIVE DATE:

This bill would take effect immediately.