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Analysis on Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Industry Trends Shows Increase in Violations, Risks to Health and Safety

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — A new [trend analysis from FracTracker Alliance](#) shows a significant increase in the number of oil and gas site violations per year in Pennsylvania since 2020, indicating an urgent need to increase regulatory measures to mitigate risks to public health and the environment.

According to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), there were a total of 102,652 violations from 2007 to 2023, with approximately 60 percent of those violations relating to environmental health and safety.

The key findings from the analysis:

- From 2007 to 2023, there were 33,069 wells drilled in Pennsylvania, including 14,380 unconventional wells.
- Unconventional and conventional well violations have trended upwards since 2021, with the number of conventional well violations per year doubling from 4,000 in 2020 to more than 8,000 in 2023.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) issued 102,652 violations from 2007 to 2023, with 61,936 records categorized as “Environmental Health and Safety” violations.
- In 2023 alone, unconventional wells produced nearly 3.4 billion gallons of liquid waste and 1.6 billion pounds of solid waste, far surpassing the waste output from conventional wells.

In Pennsylvania, data indicates that operators have frequently abandoned wells without plugging them, which can leach contaminants into surrounding water and soil and emit harmful

air toxics. The data also suggests industry practices are negatively impacting environmental quality throughout the extraction process, resulting in issues such as groundwater contamination from methane migration, radioactive materials, heavy metals, and other chemicals; degraded air quality from volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other pollutants; and high volumes of improperly managed waste.

The impacts from both conventional and unconventional wells pose significant risks to public health, particularly for individuals living near oil and gas infrastructure.

“This data doesn’t just tell a story of industry trends — it reflects the lived experiences of many Pennsylvanians,” said Matt Kelso, a Pittsburgh-based analyst with FracTracker Alliance. “We need stronger measures to manage and mitigate these impacts effectively.”

Residents of [Dimock, Pennsylvania](#), are among many impacted by oil and gas development in the state. As a result of methane migration from nearby fracking operations, the community has contended with groundwater contamination since 2008. Following a historic legal settlement in 2022, the PA DEP quietly lifted a 12-year ban on fracking in the area in 2023.

Craig Stevens, a sixth-generation Pennsylvanian who lives approximately fifteen miles north of Dimock, has been helping to provide water and other assistance to impacted residents for over fourteen years. He says elected officials have not done enough to support the community.

“None of them have even tried to reach out, let alone show up,” Stevens said. According to Stevens, elected officials in Pennsylvania have failed to prioritize the needs of their constituents over the interests of the oil and gas industry.

To address these concerns, FracTracker Alliance is advocating for more stringent regulatory practices to protect public health and the environment, including enacting the recommendations of the [43rd Statewide Investigating Grand Jury](#). These recommendations include expanding no-drill zones from 500 feet to 2,500 feet, requiring fracking companies to publicly disclose all chemicals used in drilling and hydraulic fracturing before they are used on-site, and regulating gather lines used to transport gas.

Additionally, the Grand Jury suggests a comprehensive health response to the effects of living near drilling sites and enhancing air quality assessments by considering all pollution sources in a given area.

The full analysis from FracTracker Alliance, including interactive maps and detailed charts showing the industry trends in Pennsylvania, is available [here](#). For more information about this analysis, please contact Matt Kelso, FracTracker Alliance Manager of Data and Technology, at kelso@fractracker.org.

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FracTracker Alliance is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that studies, maps, and communicates the risks and impacts of oil, gas, and petrochemical development to advance just energy alternatives that protect public health, natural resources, and the climate.