

Benzene Detection from Barnett Shale Natural Gas

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In January of 2010 Texas regulators announced detecting high levels of benzene at one out of every five sites tested in the Barnett Shale. According to The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), benzene levels exceeded the recommended safe levels at approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sites tested and two of the sites tested needed im-mediate action. Although hundreds of compounds were analyzed, the TCEQ focused on benzene, which is a known human carcinogen. Due to media attention and the urban location of the Barnett Shale wells, there has been an increase in testing around wells and compressor stations. This presentation is a discussion of the impact of Barnett Shale wells to local air quality, the TCEQ studies conducted and planned next steps, the discussion of various testing and screening methods, the sources of benzene exposure and the potential effect of benzene exposure to urban populations.