

MSSNY Resolution (revised House of Delegates version)

Resolution-2015- # 159

Introduced by: Sheila Bushkin-Bedient, MD, MPH
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Subject: Protecting Public Health from Natural Gas Infrastructure
Referred to: Public Health Committee

Whereas, after a thorough investigation by Health Commissioner Howard Zucker, MD, JD, and DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens, concerning the potential adverse public health and environmental outcomes associated with exposure to chemical and radioactive emissions and waste products from High Volume, Horizontal Hydraulic Fracturing (HVHF), Governor Andrew Cuomo determined that this energy technology posed too great a threat to the long-term health and quality of life for New Yorkers, and ultimately banned the process within the State of New York on December 17, 2014, and

Whereas, the chemical and radioactive emissions associated with HVHF are not limited to the drilling and extraction technologies at wellpads, but are also detected all along the extensive, intersecting network of natural gas pipelines, Compressor Stations, Metering Stations and other facilities associated with the entire natural gas infrastructure^{1,2}, and

Whereas, this extensive infrastructure extends into regions of New York State and other Northeastern states that are located far away from the Marcellus Shale region and from the actual drilling sites or wellpads³, and

Whereas, the pipeline infrastructure exposes humans and animals to the same chemical and radioactive emissions as those released at drilling sites, which include dangerous mixtures of contaminants such as carcinogens, mutagens, endocrine disruptors, neurotoxins, respiratory irritants, mucocutaneous irritants and toxins, and hematological, and cardiovascular toxins, and which are especially damaging to the development of embryos, fetuses, and children, as well as reproduction and survival of livestock, poultry and wild animals⁴⁻⁶, and

Whereas, The Medical Society of the State of New York already has a policy which expresses the concern of physicians for adverse health effects related to HVHF, which states that *“The Medical Society of the State of New York supports a moratorium on natural gas extraction using high volume hydraulic fracturing in New York State until valid information is available to evaluate the process for its potential effects on human health and the environment”* (Council Action, December 9, 2010, which was reaffirmed in 2013), and

Whereas, transmission and distribution of natural gas through the extensive, far-reaching infrastructure can cause adverse health effects similar to those seen near drilling sites for HVHF, and

Whereas, there is documented evidence of frequent "accidents" involving infrastructure components, due to faulty construction, and general breakdown including, but not limited to internal and external corrosion, stress corrosion, welding failure at pipeline seams,

damage to existing pipelines during construction of nearby new pipelines, damage to existing pipelines during agricultural activities, leading to chemical leaks, explosions, and fires⁷, and

Whereas these "accidents" can result in injury and death to humans, as well as damage to the homes, farms, and businesses of local residents⁸, and

Whereas, pipelines and Compressor Stations have been documented to sustain damage during natural extreme weather events such as floods, tornados, hurricanes, landslides, and lightning storms⁸, and result in explosions, fires and other life-threatening events, and

Whereas, the pipeline infrastructure in New York State involves between 53,542 - 89,705 miles of natural gas pipeline^{9,10}, with Compressor Stations located every 50-100 miles along these pipelines, and

Whereas, the compressor stations are powered by exceedingly strong engines varying from 2,250 Hp up to more than 70,000 Hp, which operate continuously, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year, and routinely "vent" methane gas into the environment, and

Whereas, the permitting process to proceed with proposed expansions of various infrastructure segments depends upon the environmental risk assessment conducted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and

Whereas, FERC is considering proposals by multiple natural gas pipeline companies to expand the system of pipelines and compressor stations throughout New York State, including Rockland, Westchester, and Putnam counties (Spectra Algonguin)¹¹, Orange county (Millenium/Minisink)¹², Delaware county (Millenium/Hancock)¹³, Schoharie county (Constitution/Wright Interconnect Project)¹⁴, and Chemung, Madison, and Montgomery counties (Dominion/New Market Project)¹⁵, **therefore be it**

Resolved, that the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY) recognizes the potential impact on human health and the environment associated with natural gas infrastructure, and be it further

Resolved that all levels of government should urge the implementation of a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in order to assess the potential adverse health risks that are associated with natural gas infrastructure, including but not limited to pipelines, compressor stations and other technologies. This would also include natural gas storage facilities and liquified natural gas (LNG) offshore, deep water export terminals. and be it further

Resolved, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the AMA for consideration in its House of Delegates.

References

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