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Moms Group Releases New Fact Sheet on How Oil and Gas Operations Harm Moms and Babies

Summary of the Science Will Help Parents in Shale Plays Understand the Health Risks

WASHINGTON, DC (May 4, 2016)—Moms Clean Air Force today released [a new fact sheet](#) aiming to help moms living near oil and gas operations understand the kind of harmful air pollution that may be emitted by well pads, drill rigs, pipelines, compressor stations, and diesel engines. The new resource also summarizes peer-reviewed epidemiological studies of maternal child health in shale plays.

The [fact sheet](#) details the potential sources and impact of seven harmful air pollutants created by oil and gas operations: benzene, diesel emissions, formaldehyde, methane, particle pollution, silica dust, and smog. It also highlights several studies noting that living closer to oil and gas operations leads to poorer health outcomes for pregnant women and their babies, compared to living farther away. While scientific studies on this topic have increased in recent years, this is the first time these have been gathered in a simple, streamlined format specifically for community members living near oil and gas operations.

“We’ve talked to moms living in shale plays all over the country who are hungry for information about what might be in the air they are breathing,” said Molly Rauch, Public Health Policy Director, Moms Clean Air Force. “Moms deserve to know that there may be serious risks from living near gas wells and pipelines.”

The fact sheet summarizes emerging science on harms to pregnant women and their babies. Much of this research involves studying birth records and proximity to gas wells. Some of the health impacts include:

- **Congenital heart defects.** In a Colorado study, babies whose mothers lived within a 10-mile radius of natural gas development had an increased risk of birth defects of the heart, compared to babies whose mothers lived farther away from natural gas development.
- **Neural tube defects.** Babies in Colorado were more likely to have neural tube defects – birth defects in the brain or spinal cord - if their mothers lived closer to natural gas operations.
- **Preterm birth.** In a Pennsylvania study, babies whose mothers lived close to natural gas operations were more likely to be born preterm (before 37 weeks gestation), compared to babies whose mothers lived farther away from drilling and gas production.
- **High-risk pregnancy.** Pregnancies in Pennsylvania among mothers who lived close to natural gas operations were more likely to be labeled “high-risk,” a designation that can include high blood pressure or excessive weight gain during pregnancy.
- **Low birth weight.** A Pennsylvania study found that living near natural gas wells was associated with having lower birth weight babies. Low birth weight babies are at increased risk of early death, infections, and learning disabilities.

"As a nurse-midwife, I am concerned about the air pollutants emitted by oil and gas operations," said Katie Huffling, Director of Programs, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. "Every one of the pollutants mentioned in this new fact sheet has the potential to harm pregnant women and babies. As healthcare providers it's important that we talk about the pregnancy risks, so that families can evaluate whether the health impacts of fracking are worth it to their communities."

"Here in the Eagle Ford shale, we are seeing methane leaks, excessive flaring, and weak enforcement and monitoring," said Krystal Henagan, Texas Field Organizer for Moms Clean Air Force. "That means more air pollution in our region. Moms in San Antonio are concerned about how these air pollutants affect the health of our kids, as we are typically downwind of the Eagle Ford Shale."

"Moms Clean Air Force's new resource on the health of pregnant women and their children should be a wake-up call for elected officials who have been putting the rights of polluters over the health of children," said Rep. Leanne Krueger-Braneky (PA-161). "As both a mom and an elected official I know it is our duty to protect our most vulnerable, and most valuable, natural resource - our children."

"As a mother living in the Marcellus shale region, I am concerned for the health and safety of my children and their 3,700 classmates who attend school half a mile from a gas well pad," said Patrice Tomcik, mother of two young boys in Butler County, Pennsylvania. "I know that babies and children are a vulnerable population and it is crucial that parents have reliable information so we can be educated about the health risks our children may be exposed to from oil and gas development. I choose to fight for the protection of our children today and for future generations!"

<http://www.momscleanairforce.org/oil-gas-babys-health/>

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Moms Clean Air Force is a community of more than 725,000 moms and dads united against air pollution – including the urgent crisis of our changing climate – to protect our children's health. We arm members with reliable information and solutions through online resources, articles, action tools and on-the-ground events.