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OIL&GAS AIR TESTS IN FT. WORTH FIND “NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN”

TCEQ Will Continue Air Testing, Monitoring in Barnett Shale

An intensive three-day TCEQ air monitoring effort in Ft. Worth the week of December 14 surveyed more than a hundred natural gas production facilities within the city limits for potentially dangerous air emissions, and found no pollutants at levels that would be a cause for concern.

“In fact, the majority of the testing during that trip found no detection of volatile organic compounds at all,” said the TCEQ’s John Sadlier, deputy director of the Office of Compliance and Enforcement. “At the sites where our monitoring staff detected odors, or our instruments detected the possible presence of VOCs, we collected more sensitive air canister samples. When analyzed, these samples showed either non-detection or levels of VOCs below levels which would cause any short-term or long-term health concerns.” Benzene was among the 22 VOCs (volatile organic compounds) tested for.

“This study was undertaken in response to concerns from citizens in the North Texas area,” said TCEQ Executive Director Mark Vickery. “Our agency is committed to protecting the health of the people of Texas. While we did not document any dangerous ambient air pollution during this study in Ft. Worth, we will continue to perform additional studies and monitoring in the area of the Barnett Shale.”

Three teams of experienced monitoring staff fanned out over Ft. Worth from December 15 - 17, equipped with infrared cameras that detect VOC emissions invisible to the naked eye, hand-held sniffers called toxic vapor analyzers, and air sampling canisters that were used to take samples when any of the instruments detected potential emissions or the staff detected strong odors.

The teams surveyed 126 natural gas production sites that ranged from drilling and fracturing processing sites to disposal sites to compressor facilities. The sites surveyed were selected by a combination of factors, including facility types, proximity of the site to residences, and size of the facility. All samples were collected off site, using standard monitoring protocols taking into account wind direction and other atmospheric conditions.

The TCEQ will continue to respond to citizen complaints concerning oil and gas facilities and has modified internal guidance to provide quicker response times to complaints. Large scale, more in-depth air quality studies covering a much larger area of the Barnett Shale formation have been conducted, and results are expected in mid-January. The results of the study will be posted on the TCEQ’s Barnett Shale website, <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/implementation/barnettshale>, which also contains additional information on air quality in the area.