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Opinion

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# Shale gas fracking opponents injured in head-on collision with facts in Texas

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An incident Tuesday in Texas graphically demonstrates that truth is invariably among the first casualties whenever environmental extremists on the Left and their allies in government and the media campaign to stop something.

Enviros are mobilizing in a campaign to stop hydraulic fracturing, the process energy companies use to get to trillions of cubic feet of previously inaccessible natural gas and oil.

Also known as “fracking,” the process involves injecting water and minute amounts of chemicals into rock strata thousands of feet below the surface.

Fracking has been used for decades in Texas and Oklahoma, but, now that it is also being used to unlock massive natural gas resources in Pennsylvania and New York, the radical enviros have joined with their allies in government and the media in a national campaign to discredit it.

If you remember the [Alar scare](#) or have been following the assorted [global warming scams](#), this new campaign against fracking will come as no surprise to you.

Last month, The Denton Record-Chronicle uncritically reported accusations by enviros that fracking and other natural gas activities in the area around Dish, Texas, caused unsafe levels of such chemicals as benzene to be detected in local residents.

“Tests on blood and urine samples taken from residents by state health officials in January have found the same toxic compounds in people’s bodies that have been detected in the air and water here. The results showed that exposure is occurring, according to Louisiana chemist Wilma Subra. ‘Clearly, it’s connecting the dots — which we didn’t want to happen,’ Subra said,” the paper [reported](#) in April.

But this week, the Texas Department of State Health Services announced [results](#) of its own testing of Dish residents, and we discovered something entirely different:

“Biological test results from a Texas Department of State Health Services investigation in Dish, Texas, indicate that residents’ exposure to certain contaminants was not greater than that of the general U.S. population.

“‘In Dish, we found no pattern to our test results indicating community-wide exposure to any of these contaminants,’ said Dr. Carrie Bradford, the DSHS toxicologist who led the investigation. ‘We were looking to see

whether a single contaminant or a handful of contaminants were notably elevated in many or all of the people we tested. We didn't find that pattern in Dish.'

"DSHS paid particular attention to benzene because of its association with natural gas wells. The only residents who had higher levels of benzene in their blood were smokers. Because cigarette smoke contains benzene, finding it in smokers' blood is not unusual.

"Some residents had test results that were at or below expected levels for various VOCs. Others had results that were slightly higher than the levels found in the U.S. population data. However, the type of slightly elevated VOC varied considerably from individual to individual, indicating no particular pattern. Many of these compounds are found in a wide array of commonly used products."

The Dish drilling activity is associated with a huge natural gas deposit known as the Barnett Shale. Fracking is one of the tools that has enabled energy companies to produce phenomenal amounts of natural gas from the Barnett Shale.

The same phenomenon is seen in Pennsylvania as energy firms begin exploration and production in the Marcellus Shale deposit. The economic benefits to both areas are only now beginning to be measured, as seen [here](#) and [here](#).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently announced that it is [undertaking a new study](#) of the potential impact of fracking on water quality. That study is clearly intended to lay the groundwork for new anti-fracking regulation at the federal level.

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