

## US fracking chemical registry to go live in a few weeks

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An online registry in which exploration-and-production companies will voluntarily disclose the chemicals they use in their US hydraulic fracturing operations is set to be activated in a few weeks, but questions remain as to whether this will satisfy the many critics of fracking.

The registry, part of a website created as a joint effort of the Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission and the Ground Water Protection Council, "will go live in the second week of April," Mike Nickolaus, GWPC special projects director, said Thursday.

The architects of the website hope that its creation will help calm some of the concerns expressed by property owners and environmental groups over the potential threat that the drilling of natural gas wells could pose to groundwater supplies.

Nickolaus said the chemical registry will allow visitors to access information, on a well-by-well basis, on the components of fracking fluids used in oil- and gas-producing basins across the US. To date, about 75 E&P companies, representing about 80% of US shale gas production, have signed up to take part in the registry program.

"We're getting more companies all the time," Nickolaus said.

The website's search function will allow visitors to conduct broad-based searches of fracking activity by state and county or by operator. It will also allow interested parties to identify hydraulic fracking jobs conducted on individual wells by identifying the well by its unique American Petroleum Institute number or by well name and lease number, Nickolaus said.

Reporting companies will identify every chemical by its mass in each additive that goes into the fracking fluid, using the ingredient's Chemical Abstracts Service identifying number. Visitors will also be able to determine how much of each chemical is used in proportion to the total volume of fracking fluid.

However, chemical data that is considered part of a well servicing company's proprietary business information will not be posted on the website, Nickolaus said.

Nickolaus said the release of the chemical information on the website will complement the efforts of the individual producing states to regulate the process of fracking.

The registry "goes beyond what some of the states are doing," he said.

Nickolaus said the advantage of having a national chemical registry is that it will establish a standardized format for reporting the data.

If each state were to adopt the use of the registry as part of its regulations on the reporting of frack fluid chemical data, members of the public would not have to deal with trying to interpret individual data sets compiled by each state, he said.

Industry advocacy groups have praised the efforts of the IOGCC and the GWPC to create a registry that would serve to reinforce the role of the states in their regulation of fracking and forestall efforts by the federal government to exert its own regulatory powers over the process.

"We continue to believe that the states are the best place to regulate hydraulic fracturing," said Dan Whitten, a spokesman for America's Natural Gas Alliance.

However, if some proponents of the registry hope that its creation will block efforts by some members of Congress to extend federal regulation over fracking, they might be disappointed.

US Representative Maurice Hinchey, a co-sponsor of the FRAC Act, which seeks to regulate fracking under the Safe Drinking Water Act, plans to move ahead with the legislation, a spokesman, Mike Morosi, said.

He said that the creation of a voluntary chemical registry would not alleviate the need for Congress to pass federal legislation on fracking.

"If the industry is willing disclose the information, they should have no problem with the disclosure provisions of the FRAC Act," he said.

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