

**Statement for the
Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee**

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PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Senator Casey and members of the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Commonwealth's work relating to emergency planning and preparedness for Marcellus Shale drilling. First and foremost, we can not provide the support our citizens deserve by ourselves. On behalf of our emergency management community and first responders across the state, I want to thank you for your continued interest and support of our public safety mission.

As you know, since 2008 the Marcellus Shale drilling activity in the Commonwealth has increased significantly. Projections are that there will be continued, dramatic growth of the Marcellus Shale industry in the coming years. There are substantial benefits of natural gas production for our Commonwealth and its citizens. However, Marcellus Shale drilling is an industry that does have inherent risks as evidenced by the recent blowout at a well in Lawrence Township, Clearfield County and a fire at a separator tank in Susquehanna County.

The role of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) is to coordinate state agency response and to support county and local governments in the areas of disaster mitigation and preparedness, planning, and response to and recovery from man-made or natural disasters. Regarding our public safety role as it relates to Marcellus Shale activity, I will discuss what PEMA has done to date and our future plans. In addition, I address a couple matters regarding the Faster Action Safety Team Emergency Response (FASTER) Act of 2010 that you are proposing.

PEMA's Engagement and Preparedness to Date

One of the frequent questions I am asked is, "What does PEMA do when there are no emergencies or disasters." This question emanates from the public perception that PEMA's primary function is that of a response agency. As those of you on this Committee know, that is not the case. It is just one of the four areas we address: prevention, protection, response, and recovery. One of our agency's primary functions is to work with county and local emergency managers to assure that throughout the Commonwealth there is a state of readiness to respond to any type of emergency or disaster. In emergency management terms – it is an "all hazards" approach to emergency management.

At PEMA, we are pleased that we have been recognized over the past two years by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III, as a leader in emergency management practices and community education. In addition, the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recently underwent the five-year re-accreditation assessment by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) Commission. Based on reviews of its plans, procedures, and documentation, Pennsylvania was the 5th state to earn EMAP accreditation in 2003, and today, is only one of 23 states and 4 jurisdictions to hold accreditation for its emergency management program capability. Just last month EMAP notified us that they approved Pennsylvania's re-certification for an additional five years. I bring the EMAP re-certification to the Committee's attention because it was not a one-day snapshot of what we do, but an exhaustive review regarding how PEMA interacts on a regular basis with the federal government, other state agencies, counties, and municipalities.

While PEMA's overarching approach to emergency management is an all hazards approach, we also focus on and address specific challenges that may arise in the Commonwealth. For example, with regards to the Marcellus Shale industry and emergency preparedness, PEMA has been engaged in the matter as far back as 2008. PEMA's Central, Eastern, and Western Area Offices have been involved in various activities regarding the process and assessing emergency management concerns. We have also been involved in tabletop exercises and roundtable meetings related to Marcellus Shale matters. County emergency management personnel and industry members have participated in those activities. PEMA's Bureau of 9-1-1 has been engaged in meetings regarding county 9-1-1 centers and addressing information on Marcellus Shale well sites. In addition, PEMA's most recent, regional Quarterly Training sessions for County Emergency Management

Coordinators – which was held in two of the area regions before the Clearfield County blowout – included a presentation from the Lycoming County Natural Gas Task Force on Marcellus Shale matters. The purpose of all these activities is to assist our state, county, and local partners in their public safety planning and preparedness for Marcellus Shale-related emergencies that might arise. In short -- PEMA has been engaged in Marcellus Shale matters and expects to be further engaged as the industry continues to grow in Pennsylvania.

PEMA also is part of a Marcellus Shale working group comprised of a number of state agencies that include: the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I), the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The purpose of the working group is to meet on a regular basis and share information that relates to Marcellus Shale industry matters. With regards to other state agencies, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner is working with industry safety personnel in developing first responders' familiarization and training.

PEMA's Course of Action Moving Forward

The Clearfield County blowout was the most significant Marcellus Shale emergency management incident to date in Pennsylvania. This incident could have been much worse. With any disaster or emergency in which the SEOC is activated, PEMA

always does an after action review of the situation. We do this in order to assess what was done well and to identify areas that may need change or future attention. While we can be pleased that the incident was handled appropriately by state, county, local emergency management personnel and our first responders, there clearly are matters that need to be addressed.

First, operators of natural gas wells must call the county 9-1-1 immediately when there is an emergency situation. It is unacceptable that the operator of the well did not notify Clearfield County 9-1-1 until almost three to four hours after the incident began. We are working with DEP, and offer to work directly with the industry, to ensure that operators comply with what all of us are taught: dial 9-1-1 when there is an emergency situation.

Second, PEMA will ask the Marcellus Shale Coalition Safety Committee to continue to partner with us in our outreach to county and local emergency management personnel and our first responders. Beyond that, our hope is that, as DEP Secretary Hanger has said, the industry have a culture of "safety first" to minimize the number of incidents that may need an emergency response.

Third, prior to the Clearfield County incident, PEMA had discussed holding a training session involving representatives from the Marcellus Shale Coalition and county emergency management coordinators. The purpose of the training would be to familiarize the coordinators with matters related to the Marcellus Shale industry. Therefore, at this year's state emergency management conference, we will have a

session dedicated to Marcellus Shale gas drilling and emergency management issues.

Fourth, PEMA will work with the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC) in marketing OSFC's Marcellus Shale training program for first responders. In March of this year, Fire Commissioner Ed Mann was attending a Marcellus Gas Training session hosted by the Lycoming County Emergency Management Office and the Marcellus Shale Coalition Safety Committee. Fire Commissioner Mann was approached by a representative from the Marcellus Shale Coalition Safety Committee about OSFC collaborating with the gas industry to develop training programs for first responders. Fire Commissioner Mann was very interested in creating a partnership with the gas industry on the matter. However, due to budget issues that were affecting state agencies, Fire Commissioner Mann told the gas industry that they would have to be willing to offset the cost associated with the development of the curriculum and the delivery of the training. The Marcellus Shale Coalition Safety Committee has agreed to provide funding for the training program. As it stands now, the program is being developed and the individuals who will teach the course will begin their training on August 10. Once those individuals have completed their training, OSFC is scheduled in September to offer the initial classes to first responders who wish to receive training program.

FASTER Act of 2010

I want to touch on a couple issues that relate to inspections and safety issues regarding Marcellus Shale gas wells. First, as you know, DEP is the lead agency in the Commonwealth regarding natural gas well drilling. On its website, DEP has excellent material about Marcellus Shale drilling. In particular, there is a Marcellus Shale Fact Sheet that discusses many of the complex issues regarding Marcellus Shale drilling in very understandable language. DEP and PEMA worked closely together on the Clearfield County incident and we will continue to try and get the industry to have improved lines of communication with state, county and local agencies for any future emergencies. Regarding the Faster Act, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to meet one of the primary goals of your legislation – to ensure the citizens of the Commonwealth are protected from any emergency situations that arise in relation to Marcellus Shale drilling.

Second, it is my understanding that DEP typically inspects a Marcellus Shale well site two to four times for environmental and drilling standards when a well is being developed. However, neither DEP nor L&I have jurisdiction for worker safety issues. It is my understanding that the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has jurisdiction over these worker safety matters. I raise this issue because while it is critically important that emergency response systems are in place in the event of an accident, preventative actions are equally as important. You may want to have your staff

discuss the Faster Act with DEP and L&I to get their thoughts on the legislation as it relates to worker safety issues and OSHA oversight for Marcellus well drilling sites.

On behalf of Governor Rendell and the 12 million Pennsylvanians we serve, I again want to thank you Senator Casey and the members of the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety in Pennsylvania and across the nation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.