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New website to provide data on hydraulic fracturing chemicals in Colorado

Many Colorado oil and gas operators will be voluntarily participating in a new website that allows the public to obtain information on the chemicals used to hydraulically fracture a well.

The website, a product of the Groundwater Protection Council and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission, is expected to debut in mid-April and will enable the public to learn about the components of fracturing fluids used at specific wells.

The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC), the agency that regulates oil and gas development in the state, believes the on-line chemical registry will provide helpful information to citizens who want to better understand hydraulic fracturing.

“We have actively supported this effort to make hydraulic fracturing information more accessible to the public, and we applaud the many Colorado operators who are participating,” said Dave Neslin, director of the COGCC. “We think this will be a useful tool for citizens as well as an important step for industry in its efforts to better educate the public about energy development.”

Under regulations that took effect in 2009, operators in Colorado must disclose fracturing constituents upon request by state regulators or by health professionals. Colorado was among the first states to create fracturing disclosure requirements for the oil and gas industry.

Mike Paque, executive director of the Groundwater Protection Council expects a “significant majority” of companies conducting fracturing in Colorado to participate. The site, expected to be operational April 11, will be available at www.fracfocus.org. ***Please note:*** *The site will not be accessible before that time.*

“Although we have had terrific participation from many states, the COGCC has been in the forefront and helped our team brief Congressional committees and federal agencies on the registry’s potential value to the public.” Paque said.

The website will contain a wealth of information about oil and gas wells drilled on or after Jan. 1, 2011. Information will include company names, well locations, types, construction details, the fracturing fluid chemicals used and chemical abstract numbers, among other data. The site will also provide information on ground water, private well testing, hydraulic fracturing, chemical toxicity, and links to other useful information

Since adopting a suite of new regulations in 2009, Colorado has taken several additional steps to ensure oil and gas development, and hydraulic fracturing in particular, protects public health and the environment. Those efforts include:

- Investigating the use of diesel fuel for hydraulic fracturing in Colorado. Although the COGCC believes that its regulations should have prevented the contamination of drinking water supplies from the use of diesel fuel or other substances for hydraulic fracturing, it is currently collecting information on the use of diesel fuel for this purpose and will assess whether this activity affected drinking water.

- Arranging to have the COGCC's hydraulic fracturing regulatory program professionally audited this year by STRONGER, a national organization consisting of state regulators, industry and environmental representatives.

- Regularly testing groundwater wells for contamination. The COGCC has so far not documented any instances of hydraulic fracturing contaminating groundwater.

- Holding a formal, public hearing in February on allegations that hydraulic fracturing had contaminated a water well in Southern Colorado. Following the presentation of evidence, the COGCC commissioners unanimously determined that hydraulic fracturing had not impacted the well in question.

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