

Task Force Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION TO PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY BY INCREASING MINIMUM SETBACKS FROM MULTI-WELL OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT

Agency or General Assembly: COGCC

Description:

- 1) Minimum setbacks for multi-well pads should be increased to 1500 ft. from occupied structures and their outdoor use areas, unless all affected parties agree to reduced setbacks and accompanying enhanced mitigation measures.
- 2) Minimum setbacks for multi-well pads should be increased to 2000 from high occupancy buildings and their outdoor use areas, and enhanced mitigation measures should be conditions of approval.
- 3) Setbacks should be measured from the building unit or it's adjacent commonly used outdoor activity area whichever is closest to the well-site and related equipment (areas such as playgrounds, track and field, and the commonly used outdoor living area immediately surrounding a home.)
- 4) Exceptions should not be granted to setback rules based on existing wells or surface agreements.
- 5) COGCC can reject a location of a multiple well production site if after a review, the scale and intensity is deemed to be inappropriate/incompatible relative to the proximity of nearby structures.

Rationale:

The Governor's executive order creating the task force includes directives "to protect public health" and "to foster a climate that encourages responsible oil and gas development." The first issue that the task force was charged to address was "the distance between oil and gas wells and any other occupied structure, or other restrictions on the oil or gas well and its related production facilities." Citizens placed on the ballot an initiative that would require a 2000 ft. Setback from well sites, and they expect that this issue be addressed in some measure.

The blow-out in Windsor in 2013 impacted an area 1500 ft. from the well head and took 30 hrs. to bring under control. The Emergency Management Director on the scene said that it would have constituted a hazard to people if there hadn't been such a large setback. A number of tank fires in 2014 required emergency response from multiple jurisdictions. Accidental leaks and allowable off-loading activities release large volumes of volatile organic compounds into the atmosphere that particularly impact those living near to the wells and tanks. Some states and jurisdictions have passed bans or moratoria to protect their citizens. Oil and Gas centers such as Dallas, Texas have instituted a 1500 ft. setback from homes. The greater setback from high