



## C...BS Evening News Whiffs on Hydraulic Fracturing Facts

***Recent national news segment on hydraulic fracturing swings and misses on technology's 60-year old record of safety, effectiveness, transparency***

The rich history of natural gas production in America, made possible today thanks to the safe and responsible use of [hydraulic fracturing](#), isn't a story that lends itself all that well to a three-minute sound-bite segment on the evening news. But CBS's [Armen Keteyian](#), previously a sideline reporter for CBS's Sunday coverage of the NFL, decided to give it a shot over the weekend.

Of course, time-constraints notwithstanding, there are plenty of good stories out there about the jobs, revenue and opportunities being created by the phenomenon of shale in general, and the smart use of fracturing technology in particular. Here's [a good one](#) – and one that's quickly told as well. Unfortunately, though, hopeful stories about jobs saved and livelihoods made better thanks to the development of clean-burning, domestic natural gas isn't sufficiently newsworthy for CBS. So Keteyian decided to take the piece in a [decidedly different direction](#) – facts, context and basic research be damned.

Committed to ensuring that the facts are fairly presented regarding fracture stimulation technology, and its long and clear record of environmental safety, [Energy In Depth](#) prepared the following fact check on the claims (mostly old, almost all previously debunked) perpetuated throughout this segment.

CBS Claims ...	... Unsupported By The Facts
<p><b>CBS News:</b> “[Stephanie Hollowich] watched her once pristine neighborhood become an industrial site. ... ‘You can’t live like this, it’s so stressful every single day.’ Today she believes three natural gas drilling operations bordering her property turned her well water black.”</p>	<p><b>FACT:</b> In a <a href="#">August 12, 2009 letter</a>, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) wrote this about Ms. Hollowich’s claims: “After a review of the information, including primarily water analysis, we cannot affirm your conclusions.”</p> <p>The “gas well in question was drilled in July 2007. The Hollowich water well was installed in October, 2007.”</p> <p>DEP also underscore the fact that “Mrs. Hollowich</p>

*alleges that the drilling of the gas well polluted the aquifer. As the following will demonstrate, **we are lacking any direct evidence to prove this assertion.***

**CBS News:** “What’s driving the drilling rush here and across the country are advances in hydraulic-fracturing, or hydro-fracing. A process whereby millions of gallons of water, sand and chemicals are blasted deep underground forcing cracks in the shale, freeing natural gas for collection.”

**FACT:** It’s true: Hydraulic fracturing is a technology used to safely stimulate energy production in unconventional natural gas plays across the nation, including the Marcellus.

But what CBS failed to note is this technology is [tightly regulated](#), has been safely used since 1949 and deployed over 1.1 million times in America.

Fracturing fluids are made up of more than [99.5 percent](#) water and sand, with a small percentage of additives used to prevent corrosion, kill bacteria and to reduce down-hole friction. DEP also [lists these fluids on its website](#), which are required by federal law to be available at every well site nationwide.

**CBS News:** “It is at the surface where problems have been reported, like blowouts, and spills into groundwater, and as shown in the HBO documentary in GasLand, ignition at the kitchen sink.”

**FACT:** While featuring a clip from the ‘documentary’ GasLand of a Colorado man lighting his tap on fire may make for ‘good TV,’ CBS viewers and others interested in the facts should know that the example cited was not proven to have a relationship with natural gas development or hydraulic fracturing.

In fact, the [Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission](#) (COGCC), whose mission is “to promote the responsible development of Colorado’s oil and gas natural resources,” determined that “*Dissolved methane in well water appears to be biogenic [naturally occurring] in origin. ... There are no indications of oil & gas related impacts to water well.*”

**CBS News:** “John Hanger is head of Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection. Since 2008 he’s doubled the number of state regulators and inspectors to oversee the gas industry.”

**FACT:** This statement is accurate, but the lack of context provided is noteworthy.

Because of an [increase in permitting fees](#) -- a move [supported by the natural gas industry](#) to ensure that taxpayers would not bear any financial burden -- Sec. Hanger was able to double his regulatory and inspection staff.

**CBS News:** “Yet nationwide, the industry is not required to disclose what potentially toxic chemicals like hydrochloric acid are used in the fracing process. A 2005 bill proposed by the Bush Administration stripped the EPA’s ability to regulate fracing, leaving it in the hands of individual states.”

**FACT:** As mentioned, the U.S. Labor Dept., through Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), requires that all additives used at every well site nationwide – both above and below ground – be available in the form of Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

Again, [PA DEP lists the entire universe](#) of these fluids online for anyone to view.

As for the popular talking point that President Bush unilaterally stripped the EPA of its ability (that it never had) to regulate fracturing through the bipartisan 2005

energy bill:

Hydraulic fracturing has never been regulated by EPA under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) -- not in the 60-year history of the technology, the 36-year history of the law, or the 40-year history of EPA.

The bipartisan 2005 bill simply clarified Congress' intent of SDWA's scope.

In fact, in a 1995 letter as President Clinton's EPA chief, Carol Browner -- who currently serves as President Obama's energy czar -- [wrote this](#):

- "EPA does not regulate – and does not believe it is legally required to regulate – the hydraulic fracturing of methane gas production wells...There is no evidence that the hydraulic fracturing at issue has resulted in any contamination or endangerment of underground sources of drinking water."

**CBS News:** [John Hanger]: "I think industry is way out of bounds for not disclosing the list of chemicals. I think industry is close to insane to have allowed that issue to become a source of suspicion."

**FACT:** "[Alan] Eichler [PA DEP environmental program manager] dispelled myths that the DEP does not know what additives a company uses in the hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' process. The **companies must submit a list of chemicals and their effects to the DEP, he said, adding that a list can be found on the department's website, [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us)**; click on 'Oil and Gas,' then click on 'Marcellus Shale' for that and other information." (Daily Courier, [9/2/10](#))

### **BONUS FACT CHECK**

#### **CBS Cites NYT Editorial In Its On-line Dispatch...**

"A provision of a law proposed by the Bush administration and passed by Congress in 2005 (dubbed by opponents the "[Halliburton loophole](#)") stripped the EPA of its ability to regulate "fracking" - leaving the job of regulatory enforcement in the hands of cash-strapped, undermanned state agencies." (CBS News, [9/4/10](#))

#### **... Which EID Has Straightforwardly Debunked**

**EID's Lee Fuller:** "Regulation of fracturing, a natural gas drilling process in use since the 1940s, has always been left to the states, not the Environmental Protection Agency. The Times endorses legislation that it says will "restore" E.P.A. authority over the process. But how can you restore something to the E.P.A. that it never had in the first place?" (New York Times, [11/11/09](#))