OIL AND GAS DRILLING: A HEALTH THREAT
SF Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility and Climate Health Now

Oil and Gas development (OGD) affects our children’s health even before they are born. CALGEM Public Health Rulemaking Scientific Advisory Panel has concluded that living in proximity to OGD causes premature birth, low birth weight, and small-for-gestational age births, which in turn increase risk of death and long-term developmental problems in newborns as well as illness through adulthood.

Children are especially vulnerable to exposure to toxins emitted from oil and gas operations. Their brains and bodies are still developing, and exposure to toxins during critical and sensitive windows of development can lead to illness during childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and across generations. Children also breathe at a faster rate than adults, taking in more toxics per unit of body weight. Children’s shorter stature places them closer to the ground where pollutants concentrate. They spend more time outdoors, are more active when outdoors, and are more likely to put their hands in their mouth. All of these physiologic and behavioral characteristics of children make them highly vulnerable to pollution from OGD.

CALGEM Public Health Rulemaking Scientific Advisory Panel has also concluded that pollution from Oil and gas development causes increased risk of development and exacerbation of lung disease such as asthma.

OGD is a leading source of harmful air pollutants. A recently published study showed air pollutants, including fine particulate matter or PM 2.5, are increased within 13,000 feet of pre-production wells (defined as the interval between spudding, or initiation of drilling, and completion) and within 6,500 feet of producing wells. Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) increases risk of heart disease and death and may have adverse effects on our brains.

Research shows that those who live in areas with poor air quality have a higher risk of severe complications from COVID-19.

Some pollutants emitted by oil and gas operations (such as benzene, ethylbenzene, and n-hexane) are listed as harmful chemicals that can harm our reproductive system or cause cancer under Prop 65 and thus are recognized as such by the State of California.

Oil and gas development has a negative impact on neuro-development and cognitive ability, increases the rate of dementia in elderly, may lead to movement disorders such as Parkinsons, and causes psychological harm.

There is also always the risk of explosions and fires in the vicinity of oil and gas development, which can expose the public to high heat, smoke, and air toxins.
Health professionals across the globe recognize that climate change is a public health crisis, impacting the health of people now and to a greater degree in the future. Climate change affects every aspect of our health and every organ in our body. Oil and gas development is a major contributor to the climate crisis. Warming temperatures and increasing extreme weather threaten our health, air, water, food, shelter, and economic security, posing an existential threat to humanity. Scientific evidence indicates that in order to avoid catastrophic climate change and its health impacts, we must phase out fossil fuels.

KEEP IT IN THE GROUND!

The most effective way to protect public health from oil and gas operations is to stop drilling and developing new wells, phase out existing oil and gas development activities and associated infrastructure. This is exactly what the CALGEM Public Health Rulemaking Scientific Advisory Panel calls the most health protective strategy.

TELL CONTRA COSTA COUNTY: NO DRILLING

Sign and share this petition: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/no-new-oil-and-gas-drilling-in-contra-costa/

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