

Huge Atlantic Coast Pipeline Compressor Station Planned for Northampton

Air Quality Hearing November 15, Garysburg Town Hall, 504 Old Highway Rd

Speak out to Protect Health and Safety! Sign up at 5:00 PM, Hearing at 6:00 PM

What is the Compressor Station that ACP wants to build? A compressor station is an installation of large compressor engines and other equipment used to push gas (mostly methane) along a pipeline, typically for 40 to 70 miles. The proposed Northampton County compressor station would include three large compressors, totalling 22,000 horsepower, and a smaller backup compressor, as well as several very large tanks to hold pipeline liquids and wastes. Remarkably, the compressor stations along the ACP are each expected to push the gas more than 150 miles each, meaning that pressures will be very high near the station, and more compressor stations may be proposed along the pipeline!

Other equipment planned for the compressor station includes: blowdown and exhaust “silencers”, metering equipment, a pipeline launcher and receiver, filter/separators, and a communications tower. Methane and other gases leak at many places from this type of equipment, so sparks can easily cause fires or explosions; planned and accidental “blowdowns” release large volumes of gas, other volatile organic compounds and particulates, dangerous to respiratory and circulatory system health.



Shown above is a large compressor station in Doddridge County, West Virginia, near where the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would start, observed in 2015 by an NC team visiting to see conditions in a poor county massively impacted by fracking for gas. Noise from the station was quite loud from across the valley. Fugitive emissions of gas and toxic volatile compounds, and hundreds of contaminated wells are the legacy of fracking for gas in the Marcellus shale in WV. The ACP would drive MORE fracking!

According to an Oct, 2017 study by the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project, **every compressor station they studied routinely releases large volumes of chemicals associated with a variety of diseases and disorders.** Nearby residents experience higher respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological problems, and report elevated stress levels due to 24/7 noise.

Concerns about Air Quality Permit for Northampton Compressor Station

A review of the permit application shows that DEQ lacks a great deal of information needed to properly regulate this facility, and doesn't take into account the impact of other nearby major polluters.

This facility would only have to submit a complete emissions listing 90 days prior to expiration of the 5 year permit before renewal. That's five years after the facility would start operating!

Visual emissions, representing high particulates, are limited to an average of 20% opacity measured over a 6 minute period, but 6 min periods averaging up to 87% can occur each hour or 4 times in 24 hours!

With all of its compressor engines bigger than 500 horsepower, this should trigger more air controls, but the permit only requires the facility's operators "to the extent practical, consistent with good air pollution control practice for minimizing emissions". This is an unenforceable requirement. Initial performance testing is only required within the first year, then every three years thereafter.

There is no acknowledgment of the impact of total air emissions from other polluting facilities nearby, including another compressor station in Pleasant Hill, the Georgia Pacifica facility just above the VA border, and the huge Enviva Wood Pellet plant a few miles to the southwest. Regional modelling and increased monitoring must be required. Formaldehyde is an irritant and toxic compound released at high levels by compressor stations as well as wood processing facilities, but it's not limited in the permit!

Pollutant emissions like nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide are regulated by the amount of pollutants released per million BTU input. That is, the more heat used, the greater pollution allowed! There are no clear monitoring requirements in the permit for Volatile Organic Compounds or Hazardous Air Pollutants.

The facility is only required to ensure "within the limits of practicality" that the equipment is operating at or near maximum rate. This is unenforceable and unclear in its purpose. There is no enforcement for failure to give 15 days' notice to regional office to observe testing.

The facility is only required to notify DAQ if there are excessive emissions for FOUR OR MORE HOURS, as a result of malfunction or abnormal conditions. Notification may wait until 9:00 AM next business day!

Dust (particulates) control and odor control are completely "complaint driven"—The facility is supposed to avoid causing "substantive complaints", excessive odors or visible emissions beyond the boundary of the facility. If there are "substantive complaints" (not defined) or excessive dust outside facility, the facility MAY be required to submit a dust control plan! NO monitoring requirements

The facility is required to "implement management practices and install and operate odor control equipment as needed to prevent odorous emissions that cause or contribute to objectionable odors beyond the boundaries of the facility." Unenforceable, and there is no monitoring required.