

MY VIEW My View: Millennium Pipeline Co. distorts facts

By Maya K. van Rossum Posted May. 8, 2016 at 6:21 AM Your March 9 article, "Sullivan town board adopts resolution opposing Millennium project," contains statements by Millennium Pipeline Company representative Michelle Hook which are obviously disingenuous and misleading. Hook contends that "it's a common misconception that all compressor stations emit those types of toxins [referring to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as propene, toluene, ethylbenzene and acetone, as well as fine particulate matter and methane]. While production compressors, found at fracking sites, give off pollution, transmission compressors — the type proposed in Highland — do not." In fact, transmission compressors continuously emit toxins throughout their lifecycle – to some degree, the level and kinds of emissions depend on the compressor's power source. Compressors powered by gas turbines that burn a portion of the natural gas in the associated pipeline, continuously emit NOX, CO, VOCs, SO2, O3, CO2, particulate matter PM10 and PM2.5, and Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs), including formaldehyde. Transmission compressor stations emit significant volumes of toxins during blowdowns, when the contents of the pipeline is vented into the atmosphere. Blowdowns are used to control flow and pressure in the pipeline, during regular maintenance, or in the event of an emergency, and are considered part of the normal operations. Compressor facilities also leak fugitive emissions, including methane and other pollutants as the result of equipment leaks. The list of toxic emissions from blowdowns and fugitive emissions includes VOCs, HAPs, benzene, styrene, methylene chloride, radioactive materials, methane and other hydrocarbons. Health effects from

these emissions include chronic respiratory issues, cardiovascular issues and heart attacks, neurological issues, cancer and reproductive and development toxicity. Transmission compressor stations often filter hazardous liquid wastes from the natural gas in the pipeline, where they are then stored in tanks on site, releasing additional VOCs, HAPs, and other unknown pollutants. The construction of transmission compressor stations also produces carbon dioxide, nitric oxide, sulfur dioxide, VOCs, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, methane, other hydrocarbons and fine particulate matter. Exposure to these emissions increases nearby residents' risk for respiratory and cardiac illness. Hook also asserts, "with transmission compressors, all it is is a big pump that pushes the gas through the pipeline... The pollution levels are far below the standards set by the federal Environmental Protection Agency." Millennium's effort to depict transmission compressor emissions as practically non-existent and harmless is unsupported by fact, science and Millennium's own materials. In Millennium's application for its Hancock compressor station, Millennium listed NOX, CO, VOCs, SO₂, O₃, CO₂, particulate matter PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, methane, propane, hexane and Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs), including formaldehyde among the known emissions from the compressor. In addition, despite their claims that emissions from this sort of compressor are "far below" EPA standards, the company's own modeled emissions exceeded the EPA's significant impact levels (SILs) for NO₂, SO₂, PM_{2.5}, and PM₁₀ in their Hancock Air State Facility Permit Application. Furthermore, Millennium's Minisink compressor is currently the subject of one of the first health impact studies to be done around a compressor station because of the extensive health impacts reported by residents. Millennium's efforts to minimize the health and environmental impacts of their compressors reflects a disregard and disrespect for the community that is a signal of what is to come if the Millennium Eastern Upgrade is approved. *Maya K. van Rossum is the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, a regional environmental advocacy organization.*