



# Portage County Health Department

## FAQ Fracking

### What is Fracking?

Fracking is a commonly accepted term for hydro-fracturing, a process where water, sand and chemicals are injected into the earth at high pressure. The aim of hydro-fracturing is to fracture rock formations deep underground in the hopes of liberating natural gas that would be otherwise inaccessible, and to bring it to the surface.

### How Deep are the Wells?

Hydro-fracking wells can be drilled vertically, vertically and horizontally or directionally, i.e. on a slant. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), vertical well sections may be drilled hundreds to thousands of feet below the land surface and lateral sections may extend 1000 to 6000 feet away from the well.

### How Much Water is Used?

A horizontal well in a shale formation can use between 7.5 million to 19 million litres of water.

### How is the Water Disposed of?

The amount of water recovered after hydro-fracking varies widely depending on the drill site. The EPA estimates anywhere from 15 to 80% of water is recovered. There are several ways of disposing of the water used in the process. It can be stored underground in impermeable injection wells that prevent it from leaking into the environment or in steel tanks or pits; recycled for use in another fracturing well; or treated and discharged back into the water supply. Because of its high salt content, the waste water is often also bought by municipalities for use in de-icing and dust suppression on roads.

### What Chemicals are Used?

Although the fluid used in fracking is mostly water, some acids, emulsifiers and other chemicals are added to make the water more viscous (thick) and effective at fracturing the rock. These include guar gum, boron, zirconium, titanium, iron and polyacrylamide. Aside from such additives, the process of fracking also releases naturally occurring salts, metals, radioactive elements like barium and strontium and carcinogens like benzene.

([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)) or (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2011/04/27/f-fracking-faq.html>)

### What to do if Fracking is Happening Near You

- If you use well water and are in the fracking zone; it is recommended to have your water tested prior to the fracking.
- It is recommended to have your water tested after the fracking has been completed.
- For more information about water testing and fracking contact Jack Madved, RS, Portage County Health Dept. at 330-296-9919 ext. 116

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