

Follow us on



Thursday, June 7, 2012 | 8:44 a.m.

Hi, (not you?) | [Member Center](#) | [Sign Out](#)

[Sign In](#) or [Register](#)



Ohio Valley 56° Clear

11 a.m. 69°

2 p.m. 75°

- [Weather Alerts](#)
- [Live Tower Cam 9](#)
- [Personalized Radar](#)

---

Updated: 2:15 p.m. Wednesday, June 6, 2012 | Posted: 2:15 p.m. Wednesday, June 6, 2012

## Gas drilling triggers backyard geysers in W.Va.

By VICKI SMITH

The Associated Press

**MORGANTOWN, W.Va.** — Authorities say a gas drilling operation in the Sardis area hit an aquifer and inadvertently re-pressurized a handful of old water wells Wednesday, creating a backyard geyser at least 10 feet high and several smaller gushers.

The house with the 10- to 12-foot geyser was flooded, said Paul Bump, chief of the Harrison County Bureau of Emergency Services. At three or four other homes, the water flooded yards and garages.

"It looked like Old Faithful moved out East," said Dale Sturm, a 63-year-old retired carpenter who noticed his patio was wet shortly before 7 a.m.

Sturm said he went outside to investigate and found water "blowing up under my car" from a crack that had opened in the cement about a foot from the garage door.

The residents' wells have long been disconnected from the indoor plumbing because the homes are all on a public water supply and don't use them for drinking.

"It's not a danger to anyone. It's more of a nuisance," said Bump, adding that the residents he spoke to were surprisingly calm. "Can you imagine, waking up to drink your first cup of coffee and see water shooting out of your yard?"

Colorado-based Antero Resources was in the early stages of drilling a well and was using only water when it hit the aquifer, said Kathy Cosco, spokeswoman for the state Department of Environmental Protection. An investigation will be conducted, but she said it's too soon to determine whether Antero committed any violations or will be subject to any fines.

Antero vice president Al Schopp said the company has deployed staff to do its own investigation, but it believes it knows what went wrong.

Workers were drilling the initial hole with just fresh water and air when the bit became stuck, he said. Rather than turn the air flow off, the crew left it on as they tried to withdraw the drill.

"That basically charged up the aquifer," he said, and the trapped air then sought a place to escape.

"It was a little bizarre," Schopp said, but the crew was still thousands of feet away from oil and gas deposits.

Once a drilling company reaches the desired depth, it installs a cement and steel casing so fluids can flow through the hole without coming into contact with any groundwater. The Sardis well was still at a relatively shallow depth, so that casing hadn't yet been installed.

The DEP said water is being tested from one home where the well was still linked to an outdoor hose used for gardening. Cosco said the company will be responsible for testing water from the other wells to ensure it's not harmful.

Sturm, meanwhile, spent the day on a neighbor's porch, reluctant to take his daughter and grandchild home for fear flammable and explosive oil and gas could be in the water.

He watched the water pour into the drainage area around his foundation and scooped up a few samples to be tested. Though the gusher eventually tapered off, Sturm said he could still hear it gurgling Wednesday afternoon when he put his ear to the crevice.

Antero's operation is about 1,000 yards behind his house on a hill, and until now, it hadn't concerned him.

But if water can get into the crack, he now wonders, why couldn't flammable oil or gas?

"Natural gas could get in that crevice and filter into my house. And if it hits your water heater, there's an explosion and there goes your house," he said. "I've not had anybody ease my mind that I can bring my family home."


Copyright The Associated Press

## More News

### We recommend

- 3 arrested in Steubenville after police confiscate drugs, guns, cash (wtov9.com)
- 4 arrested on drug charges, warrants during Steubenville traffic stop (wtov9.com)
- W. Pa. wells had casing failures in complaint area (wtov9.com)
- AP News in Brief at 5:58 p.m. EST (wtov9.com)
- Kan. Senate gives tentative OK to fracking waste (wtov9.com)

### From around the web

- A Must Read: David Brooks on Shale Gas (ExxonMobil's Perspectives)
- Mom robbed after daughter posts photo of cash on Facebook (The Daily Dot)
- Beware Of The Following Car Dealerships When Seeking A Loan (AOL Autos)
- Deadly Women: Cougar Uses Fertility to Kill Young Men  (Investigation Discovery)
- Reusing Plastic Bottles (AARP.org)

[?]

## Comments

If you would like to post a comment please [Sign in](#) or [Register](#)