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CHRISTINE EHLIG-ECONOMIDES CHAIRS TAMEST SHALE TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF SHALE DEVELOPMENT IN TEXAS

Posted on June 22, 2017

By:

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The [Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas \(TAMEST\)](#) released findings Monday from its [Shale Task Force](#), chaired by UH petroleum engineering professor and National Academy of Engineering member [Christine Ehlig-Economides](#). The report represents the most comprehensive overview to date of research on the impacts of shale oil and gas production in the state of Texas, focusing on key areas related to seismicity, land, air, water, transportation and economic and social impacts.

The state of Texas has long led the nation and the world in the development of technologies for oil and gas production. The combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing was first developed in Texas in the late 1980s. By the late 1990s, this method was used across the state to produce natural gas from previously inaccessible reservoirs.

"We've been at it now for long enough in the state of Texas to take the opportunity to look back and see what we've learned and make recommendations based on what we find," said Ehlig-Economides.

Among the report's key findings are that shale development comes with environmental and societal risks, including earthquakes, contamination to water sources and increased traffic accidents.

The report also quantifies the knowns and unknowns surrounding these risks, highlighting some of the misinformation spread on the dangers of hydraulic fracturing. For example, an increase in earthquakes in Texas since 2008 has been linked to hydraulic fracturing activities; The TAMEST report finds that all of the seismic activity potentially caused by human activities to date was caused by wastewater disposal from oil and gas development rather than hydraulic fracturing activities.

The task force brought together multidisciplinary experts from academia, industry and government to conduct a thorough review of the existing peer-reviewed literature on hydraulic fracturing in Texas. "It was a great team," Ehlig-Economides said.

Ultimately, Ehlig-Economides hopes that the report will help to bring some clarity to the remaining questions surrounding the risks of hydraulic fracturing.

"There's a lot of misinformation out there, so it is so important that we reach a scientific consensus on what we do and do not know about the impacts of shale oil and gas development," she said.

Read the TAMEST Shale Task Force Report at <http://tamest.org/shale-task-force/>