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**ROBERT SCHUTZIUS**  
SOAPBOX: OIL AND GAS

## Weld drilling fails to equate to worse health data



I work in the oil and gas industry as a reservoir engineering manager. I also attended

the governor's oil and gas task force meeting, held in Loveland in late-November, and was moved by the comments made by those living near oil and gas development; specifically, the comments of those who feel as if they are in a science experiment of the long-term health impacts of living near active oil and gas wells.

The Wattenberg Field, which underlies much of

Weld County, was discovered in 1970 has been under development for the past 45 years. In Colorado, the long-term health impact of living in and around active oil and gas wells is something that has already been experienced by those living in Weld County. Reviewing the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment website, I found the Colorado Health Indicators webpage, located at the following URL: <http://bit.ly/healthindicatorspage>

I compared the health statistics for Weld County, which has 22,088 active oil and gas wells; Larimer County, which has 257 active oil and gas wells; Denver County, with 52 active oil and gas wells; and the State of Colorado overall, which has 53,174 active oil and gas wells. I found that the health statistics of Weld County are not materially different from those of Larimer County, even though Weld County has 85 times the number of active

oil and gas wells as Larimer County.

**Cancer:** The incidence of cancer in Weld County (0.41 percent) is virtually identical to that in Larimer County (0.40 percent). Both counties have lower cancer rates than either Denver County (0.45 percent) or the state overall (0.44 percent).

**Birth Defects:** Weld County has a lower incidence of birth defects (6.01 percent) than Larimer County (6.34 percent). Both counties have lower incidence of birth defects than Denver County (8.0 percent), but Larimer County's birth defect rate is slightly higher than the State overall (6.31 percent).

**Low Birth Weight:** Weld County has a lower incident rate for low birth weights than Larimer County (7.9 percent vs. 8.2 percent). Denver County's rate of low birth weight is 8.9 percent, which is in line with the state overall (8.8 percent).

**Asthma:** The asthma rate

for adults in Weld County is 0.7 percent higher than it is in Larimer County (7.6 percent vs. 6.9 percent). Denver County reports an adult asthma rate of 7.0 percent, which is in line with Larimer County. All three counties have adult asthma rates that are lower than that reported for the state overall (8.5 percent).

**Infant Mortality:** Weld County's infant mortality rate (0.67 percent) is 0.25 percent higher than the infant

mortality rate in Larimer County (0.42 percent). Denver County's rate is in the middle (0.53 percent) and the State overall is in line with Larimer County (0.44 percent). Nutrition and access to health care are among several factors that can have an impact on infant mortality rate.

In summary, based on health statistics collected and published by the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment,

there are no material differences in the incidence of cancer, birth defects, low birth weight, asthma or infant mortality between Weld and Larimer Counties, even though Weld County has experienced an aggressive oil and gas well drilling and development program and has 21,831 more active oil and gas wells than Larimer County.

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In turn, the newspaper's editorials and columns will clearly identify the author.

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The Beacon encourages to be submitted via [editor@windsorbeacon.com](mailto:editor@windsorbeacon.com). Mail or drop off left offices, 425 Main St., W 80550.



Attachment C