

Report tallies U.S. 'fracking' toxins

United Press International, 4-17-11

WASHINGTON -- A government report has tallied up millions of gallons of carcinogenic chemicals used in natural-gas production across the United States.

The report ordered by congressional Democrats determined that 14 oil-and-gas producers used about 866 million gallons of chemicals, including benzene, xylene other toxic substances to crack open underground rock formations and release quantities of gas.

The New York Times said Sunday that while most of the chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process were harmless, there were also quantities of substances that are known to cause cancer.

The American Petroleum Institute had no immediate comment on the report.

The so-called hydrofracking process has been a source of controversy among environmentalists and people who live in gas-producing areas who fear their well water has been contaminated by the injection chemicals.

Congressional investigators and the Environmental Protection Agency said the energy industry's refusal to disclose the ingredients of their proprietary hydrofracking fluids has made it more difficult to assess the health risk to humans.