

Where in the world is New York Health Commissioner Nirav Shah?

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Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Texas, Illinois and California over the past several months, according to the Department of Health.



The Wall Street Journal wrote Monday about the trips Health Commissioner Nirav Shah has made as he completes a review of hydraulic fracturing for the state.

When asked about the trips, Health Department spokesman Bill Schwarz provided a timeline of events, which can be found below.

According to the timeline, Department of Health staff traveled to Quebec in October 2012—shortly after Shah agreed to the review—to meet with regulators there and discuss hydrofracking.

In January of this year, Shah toured a shale-gas-drilling site run by Chesapeake Energy in Pennsylvania.

And in the last few months, the Health Department says Shah has ramped up his travel, hitting Texas, Illinois and California to talk fracking since July.

A decision from Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration on whether to allow the controversial large-scale fracking process to move forward awaits Shah's review. The Department of Health has given no timetable for when that review may be completed.

Here's the timeline, as provided by the DOH:

- September 2012: Health Commissioner Dr. Shah agrees to assess public-health aspects of revised SGEIS
- October 2012: Canadian Meeting—DOH representatives attended a meeting with NYS DEC and Quebec representatives to discuss experiences in Quebec related to their implementation of an HVHF and shale gas development program
- November 2012: DOH contracted with three independent public-health experts to act as consultants and advise DOH on the Health Review of the SGEIS
- October 2012-January 2013: DOH conducted initial review and evaluation of sections of the 2012 draft final SGEIS related to potential public-health impacts and proposed mitigation measures for water resources, air resources, community impacts, radiation, noise and quality of life concerns.
- November 2012 – March, 2013: Health Commissioner Dr. Shah held several teleconferences with the three Health Review expert consultants to obtain their input and recommendations regarding the public-health aspects of the SGEIS and the draft DOH Health Review.
- November 2012 – April, 2013: Geisinger Health Study Review: Commissioner Shah and other DOH representatives participated in several meetings and phone conferences with researchers from Geisinger Health System to discuss the goals and objectives of the Marcellus Shale Initiative research program and to explore possible opportunities for research collaboration.
- January 2013: Commissioner Shah and other DOH representatives visited a HVHF drill site, a site with producing gas wells and a water-acquisition site in PA operated by Chesapeake Energy to see operational details first hand
- March 2013: US EPA Review, Washington DC: Commissioner Shah and other DOH representatives met with US EPA Headquarters representatives in Washington DC to discuss EPA's study of shale gas impacts on water resources and explore possible opportunities for research collaboration.
- April 2013 – July 2013: Additional US EPA Technical Discussions: DOH representatives are participating in invitation-only, expert-panel technical workshops held by US EPA. The technical workshops are part of US EPA's Study of hydraulic fracturing and its potential impacts on drinking water resources. Topics included: well construction and subsurface modeling, wastewater treatment, water acquisition, HVHF case studies

- May 2013: August 2013: Commissioner Shah conducts site visits to Texas, Illinois, and California to meet with researchers and state regulators.
- July 16, 2013: California Department of Public Health and Department of Conservation: Commissioner Shah met with health and environmental agency officials in California to discuss experiences and public-health concerns with HVHF shale-gas development.
- August 5, 2013: Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Railroad Commission and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality: Commissioner Shah met with health and environmental agency officials in Texas to discuss experiences and public-health concerns with HVHF shale-gas development.
- August 12, 2013: Illinois Department of Public Health and Department of Natural Resources: Commissioner Shah met with health and environmental agency officials in Illinois to discuss experiences and public-health concerns with HVHF shale-gas development.