

Meeting of Md. Panel Studying Drilling Practices Postponed

CUMBERLAND, Md. (AP) — State officials have postponed a meeting of a panel studying natural gas drilling plans in western Maryland.

The panel was to have met Monday in Cumberland to discuss drilling practices employed elsewhere. The meeting was postponed because of predictions of bad weather.

The meeting was to have included a research report that says wells should be closed-loop systems so that any spills can be contained.

The report was prepared by researchers at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science

The researchers studied hydraulic fracturing, which uses sand, water and chemicals to free gas from shale. The technique has sparked an energy boom in other states but some blame it for polluting groundwater.

No drilling permits can be issued in Maryland until the panel issues its final report next year.

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