

**Press Statement**  
**Peggy Utesch**  
**Release of the 2009 Update to Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Field – 2009 Update**  
**May 21, 2009**

Before the 2005 report was completed, a group of Western Colorado Congress members conducted citizen inspections on over 30 well sites in Garfield County, and more than three quarters were found to have violations.

In 2008, a major waste pit breach was reported by a landowner near the town of Parachute that had not been reported to inspectors by the industry. The contaminates were flowing toward Parachute Creek. When Western Colorado Congress members flew over the area, looking for the site in order to document it photographically, they believed they'd been successful, only to find out they had discovered a second, major waste pit accident. And just this spring, a landowner witnessed what may be the illegal filling in of another waste pit – chemicals buried that, over time, will likely contaminate irrigation and well water.

We are all well aware of the need for inspection and enforcement. The situation with food inspection of the peanut industry showed us a system that was broken. It got fixed immediately because large numbers of people had become critically ill in a short period of time. The situation with the lack of inspection and enforcement of natural gas drilling activities is similar. Some people have gotten sick, and many more may be impacted over time as the numbers of wells increase with inadequate inspection and enforcement of regulations.

In the four years that I lived with more than 24 gas well pads surrounding my home, I witnessed and reported numerous violations, including the illegal spudding of four wells before the permit was issued, the over pressurization of two different condensate tanks, each of which spewed contaminates across the well pad and adjacent properties and were not cleaned up until the land owners demanded action, and an explosion and fire that knocked a house off its foundation.

There are incidents and accidents that occur frequently, and when drilling is taking place near homes and communities, having adequate inspection staff and the necessary mechanisms in place to protect public health and safety cannot continue to be ignored. In Grand Junction, Colorado, in 2008, only 18 of 313 high priority inspections were completed, and only 344 of the 1463 low priority inspections were done. Although this is a statistical improvement from 2005, it is still abysmal, and characterizes a system that is not functioning in the best interest of people or the environment it is meant to protect.