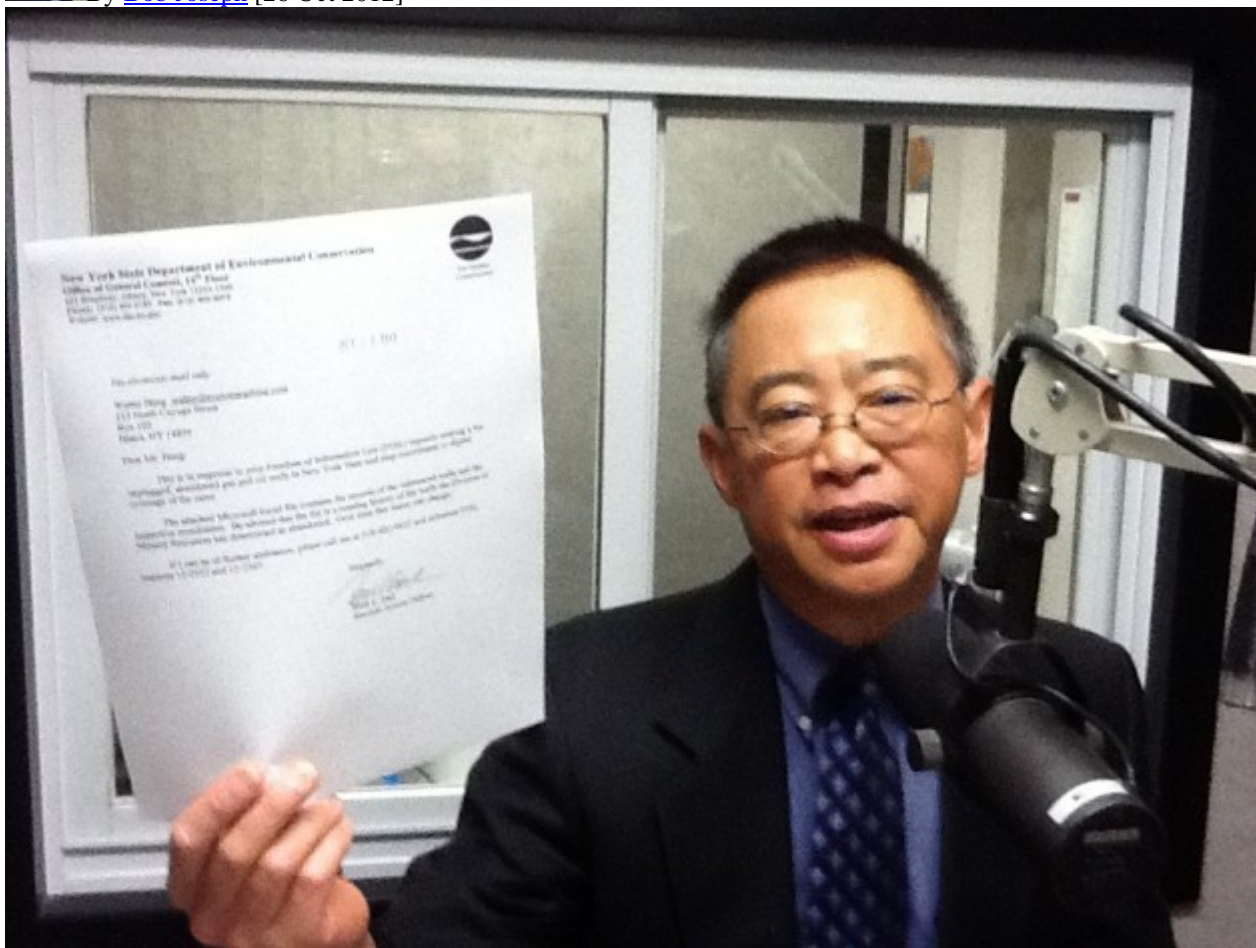


## Is There An Unplugged Gas Well Near Your Home?



By [Bob Joseph](#) [26 Oct 2012]



**Bob Joseph/WNBF News**

Searchable maps with information about thousands of unplugged, abandoned gas and oil wells in upstate New York are being made available by an environmental data collection company.

Walter Hang, president of Ithaca-based Toxics Targeting, says the details about 5,046 old wells in 38 counties had not been available to the public.

Speaking on **WNBF Radio's Binghamton Now** program, Hang said the wells can leak gas, oil and very high concentrations of toxic metals.

Hang said the wells are supposed to be plugs to prevent leakage. But he said the regulations haven't been strictly enforced.

He said the Department of Environmental Conservation has never advised people who live near the abandoned wells that the sites exist.

Hang said Southern Tier residents will be “shocked” to learn how many uncapped wells exist in the region. He said some are near homes, drinking water aquifers and wetlands.

Hang said the existence of the wells contradicts DEC assertions that the agency has been regulating oil and gas extraction safely for decades.

Drilling for gas has been going on in New York state for nearly two centuries. The first well specifically for natural gas in the United States is said to have been located in Fredonia in 1821.

Hang said there are more than 12,000 active oil and gas production wells across the state.

After wells are no longer productive, they can release brine that contains toxic materials if they’re not plugged.

Hang said unplugged wells can leak five gallons of brine per minutes.

He said he believes the DEC has deliberately misled the public by not alerting New Yorkers of the existence of such wells.

Hang said it would be “irresponsible” for the state to allow shale gas fracking until the issues with the thousands of abandoned wells have been addressed.

Hang called on the state to delay acting on finalized environmental rules that could clear the way for high-volume hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale.

He said while everyone wants the benefits of gas, it “doesn’t make sense to exacerbate all the thousands of existing contamination problems” in New York.

Hang said he hopes Governor Andrew Cuomo will intervene to prevent fracking from going forward until the safety threat posed by old well sites has been tackled.

The abandoned well database can be found at <http://toxicstargeting.com>