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BREAKING NEWS AND OPINION

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**ReThink Review: *Gasland* -- Is Your Tap Water Flammable?**

A man holds a lighter up to a running faucet, only to have the water burst into a fireball that comes perilously close to engulfing the man's torso in flames. This has become the iconic image of Josh Fox's documentary examining the dangers of natural gas extraction, *Gasland*, and for good reason -- it's such a stark, dramatic illustration of the damage energy companies are willing to inflict on both the environment and human lives as they attempt to extract natural gas using the controversial method known as hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." See the trailer for *Gasland* below.

Fracking, which was first developed by Halliburton (who else?) over 50 years ago, involves drilling a deep, L-shaped well (in the case of horizontal fracking) into an area believed to contain natural gas, then pumping in millions of gallons of water, sand, and chemicals (known as fracking fluid) to crack the earth around the gas deposit, allowing the gas to escape so it can be captured closer to the surface. However, natural gas as well as the toxic chemicals found in fracking fluid can make their way into aquifers used to supply drinking water, effectively poisoning wells and making tap water combustible.

See my ReThink Review of *Gasland* below, as well as my conversation with Cenk Uygur of the Young Turks (and MSNBC!) about the dangerous chemicals found in fracking fluid, the energy industry's response to *Gasland*, and the connections between fracking, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, and peak oil.

As I mentioned in my review, the natural gas industry has responded to *Gasland* by launching a website called Energy In Depth to debunk its claims. But what's interesting is what is admitted through this website if one actually reads it, like the fact that fracking has never been regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act -- something which might have happened in 2004 if a study by Bush's EPA hadn't concluded that there was no evidence that fracking polluted water supplies, yet conducted no water tests that would have found such evidence. Or if Dick Cheney's 2005 energy policy had re-classified fracked wells as injection wells.

It also may be true that only 1% of fracking fluid contains the dozens of dangerous chemicals -- like arsenic, asbestos, barium, cadmium, chromium, cyanide, lead, mercury, chlorobenzene, dichlorobenzene, dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls, toluene, trichloroethylene, xylene, radium 226-228, uranium, etc. -- that can be found on [energyindepth.org](http://energyindepth.org) (if you look hard enough, like on page 2-13 through 2-16). But when you consider the fact that each frack uses 3-8 million gallons of fracking fluid, and that wells are commonly fracked dozens of times (and maybe even upwards of 300 times), that 1% adds up to millions of gallons of chemicals, much of which is never recovered for treatment.

In an interview with the New York Times, Fox promised a response to Energy in Depth's attacks on *Gasland*, which you can find [here](#). But perhaps the clearest response by the energy industry is their reluctance to respond to what would seem like a simple request by Fox:

I've been asking the industry since the movie has been out there, "If you've got a town where there's more than 100 wells, and everything's going fine, and you don't have these issues, take me there."

*Gasland* is now available on DVD and Netflix. To find out more about *Gasland*, visit [gaslandthemovie.com](http://gaslandthemovie.com).

You can also find out more about the FRAC Act and efforts to prevent fracking in the Marcellus Shale formation that runs under parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland and Tennessee by visiting [MarcellusProtest.org](http://MarcellusProtest.org).