

CAC Testimony (11/12/2025)

Good afternoon. My name is Nate Eachus, and I live within the 10-mile Nuclear Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) surrounding the Talen Susquehanna Nuclear Power Plant in Salem Township, Pennsylvania.

This area already carries enormous emergency and evacuation risks due to the operating nuclear facility with the addition of Amazon's data center. On this single campus now sit a natural gas pipeline, methane-powered data centers, hydrogen storage, and 204 aboveground diesel tanks holding 1.3 million gallons of fuel, all directly next to an operating nuclear power plant. Multiple new industrial and energy projects are being approved inside this same emergency zone, with no cumulative risk assessment, no public transparency, and no proper oversight by DEP

In addition, the neighboring community of Berwick is officially classified as an Environmental Justice community under the DEP PENNENVIROSCREEN EJ Mapping Tool, with an 82% EJ Score, reflecting severe environmental and health burdens that already place residents at disproportionate risk.

DEP's data on Berwick tells the story: Sensitive Populations: 98%, Heart Disease: 96%, Disability: 83% , Asthma: 81%, No Insurance: 82%, Cancer: 76%, Hazardous Waste & Storage: 85%, Land Remediation Needs: 73%

And yet, the Amazon data center, powered by methane combustion when Amazon promised carbon free and net zero energy, is now pulling its cooling water directly from Berwick's aquifers, which are owned and operated by Pennsylvania American Water, a private, for-profit water company. This means an Environmental Justice community's drinking water source is being depleted to cool corporate data servers, while residents shoulder the environmental burden. Water and electric bills continue to skyrocket as massive data centers consume enormous amounts of energy, leaving Berwick's working families to pay the price for corporate profit.

I publicly commented on DEP SSIP Permit and the risk of storing 1.3 million gallons of diesel (for Amazon Data Center) near this explosive energy cluster in Salem Twp and the DEP's official response to my comments was this:

"Primary oversight of fire, explosion, and safety issues is handled by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L & I), through their Flammable and Combustible Liquids program and associated installation permitting process. While the SSIP process is not designed, nor intended, to consider fire and explosion concerns"

DEP defers oversight of fire and explosion hazards to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, leaving the community exposed to significant risk, no official emergency management plan, and no explanation by the Department of Labor and Industry on these extreme risks. These state agencies are not serious about protecting the public health of human beings.

And just last week, on October 28, 2025, a hydrogen explosion occurred on that very campus. That should have been the wake-up call. Instead, DEP continues to approve new speed permits as if stacking explosive, chemical, and radiological hazards side-by-side poses no risk. DEP's narrow, technical review process completely ignores the catastrophic risk of fire or explosion involving diesel or LNG fuel sources near an active nuclear site.

There has been no comprehensive safety analysis by the DEP, the Department of Labor & Industry, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or PEMA assessing the cumulative dangers of fuel explosions, pipeline rupture, and radiation release in this zone. That omission is not just negligence, it's a public-safety failure.

Compounding this, the DEP's Wilkes-Barre and Williamsport regional offices violated 25 Pa. Code § 127.521 by approving the Salem Township Moxie Freedom Title V Air Permit (No. 40-00129) on August 13, 2025, without providing the legally required 30-day public notice and comment period in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* or a local newspaper for Title V air permits. This illegal shortcut stripped residents of their right to review and comment on one of the region's highest-polluting methane facilities, one that emits cancer-causing chemicals into a community already carrying legacy pollution burdens.

That violation erodes public trust, undermines transparency, and breaks DEP's own rules designed for community engagement.

Meanwhile, in Hazle Township (Luzerne County), just a few miles away, another Environmental Justice community is being victimized under "speed permits" that bypass public review and fast-track large industrial developments. Hazle Township ranks among the worst PA rankings, 92% EJ Score according to the DEP PENNENVIROSCREEN EJ Mapping Tool, with exposure to toxic water emissions (92%), heart disease (94%), cancer (87%), traffic pollution (97%), land contamination (99%), hazardous waste exposure (99%), and mining concerns (99%).

Yet, the Governor's speed permit program has allowed developers to clear-cut entire forests, operate through the night, and eliminate protective buffers next to neighborhoods, all before the township Supervisors have even voted to adopt a final development plan. And now, new methane-fueled data centers, requiring over 5 million gallons of water per day for cooling, are being built on these sites. They'll raise electricity costs, release more pollution, and further poison overburdened EJ communities, all while residents are shut out of the process.

This is what environmental injustice looks like.

I'm calling on the Pennsylvania DEP to:

1. Suspend the Moxie Freedom Title V permit until a lawful 30-day public comment period is held.
2. Conduct an independent cumulative risk assessment for the Salem Township Energy Campus, including explosive, chemical, and radiological hazards, in coordination with the NRC, PEMA and all 27 communities that live within the 10 mile EPZ zone.
3. End the use of "speed permits". Especially in Environmental Justice zones, like Berwick, Salem Twp(exposed to nuclear radioactive waste), Hazle Twp where residents already face higher pollution and health risks.
4. Restore public participation and transparency which is the cornerstone of environmental protection.

Without these steps, DEP cannot credibly claim to be protecting public health, safety, or environmental justice.

In closing, after everything that has been said, it is clear that our region, from Salem Township to Hazle Township to Berwick to all of PA is under attack. I call on the Citizens Advisory Council & Chair Bob Barkanic, the DEP, the NRC, PEMA, and the Governor's Office to act immediately, to investigate the October 28th hydrogen explosion next to the Nuclear site, halt these reckless "speed permits," and protect the water, air, and health of the communities trapped in this overlapping zone of nuclear, industrial, and corporate data center invasion spreading across Pennsylvania. These agencies must act now, as this unchecked expansion continues to endanger the health, safety, and trust of families across Pennsylvania.

That concludes my testimony for today.

Nathan Eachus (11/12/2025)

Concerned Butler Township Luzerne County Citizen