Mr. Hennen: My name is Michael Hennen, and I’m the president of the Denton Drilling Awareness Group. And fracking in particular since it was started here on top of what’s called the Barnett Shale, which is the mother-lode of natural gas and which includes roughly the western half of Denton County. The process of fracking does bad things to our air, and to our water in particular. The air pollution is caused by escapes of gasses though the well heads. When the fracking process occurs, there is equipment at the top of the well that is supposed to gather in these gasses. But we know that there are leaks from those wells and particularly methane, which is one of the most powerful greenhouse gasses, escapes out of the well heads and out of the tubing and the pipes that are supposed to contain it. It escapes into the atmosphere and contributes to global warming and also contributes to such things as health problems like asthma and other things. Methane is not the worst in that regard, we also have in Denton County, a very, one of the worst air quality readings in the whole state of Texas when it comes to ozone. And the gasses that escape from fracked wells also contribute to the ozone concentration in the air, which makes Denton in a very bad position when it comes to ozone in the air. With regard to water, the fracking process for wells say 8,000 feet deep, can use millions of gallons of our good water to mix it with the
sand and chemicals to do the fracking process. And when that process is completed, they have those millions of gallons of water that have to be disposed of, because they are contaminated and can’t be reused. So that water is pumped under high pressure into wells, special wells that are drilled for the purpose of injecting that water. They are called injection wells. And another concern that we have environmentally is that high pressure injection has caused earthquakes to start to occur wherever the injection wells are being used. My concern is over the air, over contamination of water, not only the water that is being used to drill the wells, but also though chemical escape from the wells themselves into the aquifers that are below the surface. [Break] I can tell you that I have witnessed wells being drilled. Witnessed—from the distance I can get from a fracking well, I’ve witnessed it taking place. It’s a very loud process. The machinery that’s used to frack wells is very loud. Often the companies are required by the municipalities where the drilling is taking place, to put up sound barriers to try to hold down the amount of sound that escapes from the drilling site. But they are still loud, in any case. In addition to that, you see at these sites that some of the initial gas that comes out of the well is more than they can handle at the time, and it’s flared off. In other words, they have a large tower, a pipe and it burns the gas off at the top of the pipe. That’s called a flare, and you’ll see those flares going, even in the city of Denton. Near the corner of Bonnie Brae and Scripture Street, right across from McKenna Park, there is a fracking site and right there they were doing flaring, they were doing their loud drilling, which is very close to a public park, a playground, a hospital complex, all those things are in close proximity to what’s basically an industrial process. [Break.]

Mr. Hennen: In May we had lightning strike a gas well out in the western part of Denton, very close to houses in a neighborhood there. We have other sites in the city where we have gas wells near schools. A similar thing is possible to happen there. We all should be concerned about what happens in the
event there is an explosion or whether there is an escape of gas, or an escape of toxic liquids of some kind near our schools and our neighborhoods. Those are things that should concern, I think, all the citizens of Denton. I was shocked to see that it was happening so close to our schools, our parks, our hospitals. I'm involved to try to keep it out of our cities. There are hundreds and thousands, and maybe millions of acres where it's possible for the oil and gas industry to do it. [Break].

Mr. Hennen: Denton Drilling Awareness Group, which we call DAG, D-A-G, has been circulating a survey to 1. determine the level of knowledge people do have about gas wells and fracking in our neighborhoods, or near their schools and work places, and 2. to try and assist the city in developing procedures for dealing with emergency events, events which cause emergencies such as an explosion, escapes of gases, escapes of toxic liquids. So that we can handles those things if they happen in Denton. That's one of the things we are doing. We are also working with other groups and other cities in Texas to—try to repeal HB40. Fossil fuels should stay in the ground. That's where they have the least possibility of contaminating our air, our water, and causing global warming. So we should be doing everything we can to develop alternative, renewable sources such as wind and solar, and that sort of thing to stop warming the planet by burning fossil fuels. There's a lot of associated costs to our cities and to our states. The transportation of that stuff is dangerous.

Interviewer: Right. Very enlightening. Thank you so much.

Mr. Hennen: You're welcome.

Interviewer: That was great.
[End of interview]