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## Fracking produces annual toxic waste water enough to flood Washington DC

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Fracking in America generated 280bn US gallons of toxic waste water last year – enough to flood all of Washington DC beneath a 22ft deep toxic lagoon, a new report out on Thursday found. The report from campaign group Environment America said America's transformation into an energy superpower was exacting growing costs on the environment. "Our analysis shows that damage from fracking is widespread and occurs on a scale unimagined just a few years ago," the report, [Fracking by the Numbers](#), said.

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## Fracking produces annual toxic waste water enough to flood Washington DC

Growing concerns over radiation risks as report finds widespread environmental damage on an unimaginable scale in the US

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Waste water evaporation pits from gas drilling and fracking in Pinedale area in Wyoming.  
Photograph: Ted Wood/Corbis

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"Our analysis shows that damage from fracking is widespread and occurs on a scale unimagined just a few years ago," the report, Fracking by the Numbers, said.

The full extent of the damage posed by fracking to air and water quality had yet to emerge, the report said.

But it concluded: "Even the limited data that are currently available, however, paint an increasingly clear picture of the damage that fracking has done to our environment and health."

A number of recent studies have highlighted the negative consequences of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, which have unlocked vast reservoirs of [oil](#) and natural [gas](#) from rock formations.

There have been instances of contaminated wells and streams, as well as evidence of methane releases along the production chain.

The Environment America report highlights another growing area of concern – the safe disposal of the billions of gallons of waste water that are returned to the surface along with oil and gas when wells are fracked.

The authors said they relied on data from industry and state environmental regulators to compile their report.

More than 80,000 wells have been drilled or permitted in 17 states since 2005.

It can take 2m to 9m gallons of water mixed with sand and chemicals to frack a single well. The report said the drilling industry had used 250bn gallons of fresh water since 2005. Much of that returns to the surface, however, along with naturally occurring radium and bromides, and concerns are growing about those effects on the environment.

A study published this week by researchers at Duke University [found new evidence of radiation risks from drilling waste water](#). The researchers said

sediment samples collected downstream from a treatment plant in western Pennsylvania showed radium concentrations 200 times above normal.

The Environment America study said waste water pits have been known to fail, such as in New Mexico where there were more than 420 instances of contamination, and that treatment plants were not entirely effective.

"Fracking waste-water discharged at treatment plants can cause a different problem for drinking water: when bromide in the wastewater mixes with chlorine (often used at drinking water treatment plants), it produces trihalomethanes, chemicals that cause cancer and increase the risk of reproductive or developmental health problems," the report said.

About 260bn US gallons of the 280bn US gallons of toxic waste water were from Texas, a state that has undergone three years of severe drought and where there is fierce competition for water between the oil industry and farmers and ranchers.

Environment America said that water was now taken out of the supply and that storing, transporting and even recycling the toxic waste carried environmental risks. ""They say a lot of it is recycled. It is still 280bn gallons of toxic waste generated that is running through our communities," said John Rumpler, author of the report.

Spokespersons for Energy in Depth, the industry lobby group, disputed the findings as "alarmist:" and "meaningless".

"Number is meaningless unless they're alleging something is happening with it, ie ending up in tap water," Steve Everley, the lead spokesman for the lobby group said on Twitter.

Other consequences of fracking highlighted in the report included: 450,000 tons of air [pollution](#) a year and 100m metric tons of global warming pollution since 2005.