

Gas field workers cited in Pa. hospital's losses

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JERSEY SHORE, Pa. – The first operating loss in about five years at a north-central Pennsylvania hospital is a sign of the influx of natural gas field workers without health insurance, the facility's CEO said.

Jersey Shore Hospital president and CEO Carey Plummer told the Sun-Gazette of Williamsport that many subcontractors attracted to the area's [Marcellus Shale](#) drilling boom do not cover employees.

That has brought a growing number of uninsured people to the community-owned, nonprofit hospital, Plummer said.

“We had a loss,” Plummer said. “I don't think it's a sign of the economy. I think it's the influx of the gas, industry and those who lack insurance.”

The hospital reported an operating loss of \$770,000 while providing more than \$3 million in care to people unable to pay in its most recent fiscal year. The uncompensated care figure is the highest it has ever seen.

Other significant factors contributing to the hospital's losses include cuts in Medicaid reimbursements, employee salary increases and higher pension costs, Plummer said.

Jersey Shore is about 65 miles north of Pennsylvania's capital of Harrisburg. The hospital says its service area covers about 45,000 people in Clinton and Lycoming counties. It reported 3,260 acute care days, 67,691 outpatient visits and 14, 835 emergency room visits in the most recent fiscal year.

With about 660 wells, Lycoming County is the fourth most heavily drilled county in the Marcellus Shale rush that began in earnest in 2008, according to state records. The footprint in Clinton County is smaller, with just under 100 since then. The state's two most heavily drilled counties, Tioga and Bradford, are neighbors of Lycoming County.