

Methane Rule Release Toolkit

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Fall 2022

OVERVIEW

Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released an updated draft rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations across the U.S. This proposal is an important step towards addressing the climate crisis and protecting the health and safety of communities across the country.

This proposal builds on the [draft rule released by EPA in 2021](#), and heeds the call of the hundreds of thousands of people who submitted public comments earlier this year urging EPA to go further to cut methane, and the thousands of people from across the country who sent petitions to President Biden urging his administration to move swiftly and publish strong methane rules. We asked for bold and immediate action to cut methane, and the Biden administration listened. Still, there is more work to be done to ensure that strongest federal safeguards possible are finalized.

Americans want and need strong solutions for pollution that protect our health, advance environmental justice, and get us on track to cutting climate pollution by 50-52% by 2030—which President Biden promised and scientists say is needed.

Please join us in highlighting how the Biden administration's updated proposal will cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations across the country, and help us underscore the importance of finalizing the strongest possible safeguards quickly to protect public health and slow climate change.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- View an FAQ detailing why we need strong EPA methane rules [here](#).
 - *Note: This is an internal doc, and not for public distribution.*

MESSAGING

Toplines

- The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) updated draft rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations across the country is an important step towards addressing the climate crisis and protecting the health and safety of communities across the country.
- This proposal builds on the [draft rule released by EPA in 2021](#) by:

- Strengthening leak detection and repair (LDAR) requirements, including requiring inspections at small wells with leak-prone equipment which are responsible for half of all methane emissions nationwide;
 - Maintaining the zero-emitting pneumatic equipment requirements for pneumatic controllers and expanding this requirement to include pneumatic pumps;
 - Taking steps toward addressing super-emitters through a third-party monitoring program; and
 - Requiring that abandoned wells are subject to inspections until closure and that oil and gas companies must submit a closure plan and conduct a post-closure survey of these wells.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) updated rule heeds the call of hundreds of thousands of people who submitted public comments earlier this year urging EPA to go further to cut methane, and the thousands of people from across the country who petitioned President Biden and his administration to move swiftly and publish strong methane rules. We asked for bold and immediate action to cut methane, and the Biden administration listened.
 - Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released an updated draft rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations across the U.S. This proposal is an important step towards addressing the climate crisis and protecting the health and safety of communities across the country.
 - Still, there is more work to be done to ensure that the strongest possible methane safeguards are finalized by EPA.
 - We look forward to a robust public comment period where environmental justice communities, Tribes, NGOS, businesses, industry, and state and local governments can weigh in and make their voices heard.
 - By enacting strong methane safeguards, the Biden administration can implement solutions for pollution that make good on the president's public health, climate and justice commitments—including cutting climate pollution in half by 2030.
 - Now, EPA must move quickly to finalize these safeguards and enact solutions for pollution as soon as possible. We need the Biden administration to use all of its authority to enact strong solutions for pollution that protect our health, advance justice, and fight climate change.
 - Every day that passes without these protections is a missed opportunity to reduce climate and air pollution from the oil and gas industry and safeguard the health and wellbeing of thousands of people across the country. Our communities deserve action now.

Background

- Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere. Even though CO₂ has a longer-lasting effect, methane sets the pace for warming in the near term.
- Methane set a record for the second year in a row, scientists reported, just as the [UN's panel on climate change warned](#) the world is running out of time to rein in [fossil fuel emissions](#). [Methane](#) — the second largest contributor to the human-caused climate crisis after carbon dioxide — increased by 17 parts per billion in 2021. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, this is the largest amount since measurements began nearly 40 years ago.
- Millions of people across the U.S. and around the world are [experiencing record heat](#), and suffering severe health impacts as temperatures continue to rise. Slowing today's unprecedented rate of warming can help avert our most acute climate risks, including wildfires and extreme weather.
- Toxic pollutants released alongside methane, such as VOCs, can worsen asthma and respiratory disease while toxics like benzene increase the risk of cancer, cause immune system damage and developmental problems. Living near unconventional oil & gas wells has been shown to [shorten life spans](#) for residents 65 and older.

Public Health Impacts

- New [geospatial analysis released](#) by Earthworks and FracTracker shows that more than 17.3 million people, including 3.9 million children under 18 reside within a half mile health threat radius of active oil and gas production operations.
- As each day goes by without these critical protections in place, emissions at oil and gas sites continue to jeopardize the health and safety of workers and the communities living closest to development.
- Toxic pollutants released alongside methane, such as benzene, can worsen asthma and other respiratory diseases, increase [the risk of heart attacks](#) and cardiovascular diseases, increase the risk of cancer, cause immune system damage, and even developmental problems in children. Living near unconventional oil & gas wells has been shown to [shorten life spans](#) for residents 65 and older.
- Toxic emissions from oil & gas operations are particularly harmful for pregnant women and fetuses, and are associated with [higher rates](#) of preterm birth, low birth weight, and congenital heart disease. Children living near oil & gas facilities are [at risk](#) for higher rates of childhood asthma and hospitalization from asthma. Carcinogens involved in fracking may increase the risk of childhood leukemia.
- Air pollutants from the oil and gas supply chain also contribute to the ozone smog pollution that blankets the U.S. in the warmer months. [Volatile organic compounds](#)

[\(VOCs\) and methane](#) vented and leaked from the oil and gas supply chain and nitrogen oxides (NOx) generated by gas flaring and engines at natural gas facilities react together in the presence of sunlight to form ozone smog. What's more, methane pollution from oil and gas facilities also worsens climate change, resulting in hotter weather and stagnant air — conditions that make ozone smog levels worse.

- When inhaled, ozone smog can impair lung function, trigger asthma attacks, and aggravate diseases such as bronchitis and emphysema, in some cases leading to premature death. Children, the elderly, and people with existing respiratory conditions are the most at risk from ozone smog pollution.

Environmental Justice

- Communities of color in many counties throughout the U.S. are disproportionately impacted by oil and gas development.
- Living near oil and gas wells is associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease, impaired lung function, anxiety, depression, preterm birth and impaired fetal growth.
- Several studies show there are many counties throughout the U.S. where there is an overlap of high density oil and gas development and communities of color and people living below the poverty line. Some studies have shown communities of color that bear a disproportionately high exposure to flaring operations.
- 1.6 million Latinxs in the U.S. live within a half-mile of an oil and gas facility. Latinx children in the U.S. are twice as likely as non-Latinx whites to die from asthma attacks, partly because of the disproportionate pollution burden Latinx communities experience from polluting industrial sources like oil and gas facilities in many counties throughout the U.S.
- According to [a new study](#) that combines locations of active oil and gas wells with census tract data, about 17.3 million people are living within ½ mile of a well, including:
 - 1.6 million Hispanic people;
 - 919,000 Black people;
 - 311,400 Asian people; and
 - 260,000 Native American people
- The study also finds that of the 10 million people living within a ½ mile of an oil and gas well:
 - 1.5 million live below the poverty line;
 - 1.5 million are seniors; and
 - 645,400 are young children.

Climate & Extreme Heat

- Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere. Even though CO₂ has a longer-lasting effect, methane sets the pace for warming in the near term.
- Slowing today's unprecedented rate of warming can help avert our most acute climate risks, including wildfires and extreme weather.
- Methane pollution from the oil and gas sector is accelerating the pace of climate change and harming the health of our families and communities — and it is a problem that is only getting worse.
- From historic structures lost to fire, coastal communities and ecosystems destroyed by sea level rise and hurricanes, and species pushed to extinction from loss of habitat, the cultural and natural landscapes in and around national parks have never known change at the current pace and scale.
 - National parks like Glacier, Joshua Tree and Saguaro risk losing their namesake features while other parks like Shenandoah are experiencing warming water temperatures, threatening the very existence of some species like the native brook trout.
- When companies rush to extract oil, some forgo investments necessary to capture and sell gas and instead burn it as a waste product, emitting a host of climate and health-harming pollutants. Many flares have been found to malfunction or fail entirely, spewing methane directly into the atmosphere.
 - Recent [science](#) found flaring emits 5 times more methane than previously thought, because of how often flares are unlit or malfunctioning.
 - Nationwide, researchers estimate that flaring emits roughly 600,000 metric tons of methane every year – which has the same near-term climate impact as 10 million cars.
 - States like Colorado and New Mexico have created rules to end pollution from routine flaring that set a strong example for EPA to follow.
 - We need strong federal rules to address pollution from routine flaring, as 80% of the problem is concentrated in just two states – N. Dakota and Texas – that have not taken sufficient action to address flaring.

SAMPLE STATEMENT

"The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) updated draft rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations as the country is critical to tackling the climate crisis and protecting the health and safety of communities across the country. We asked for bold and immediate action to cut methane, and the Biden administration listened.

This proposal is an important step forwards for the millions of people living on the frontlines of oil and gas development, and confirms that the Biden administration is serious about confronting the climate crisis head-on. Strengthening and finalizing these safeguards quickly is essential to advancing environmental justice, slowing the rate of climate change, and keeping *everyone's* air clean and safe to breathe."

SAMPLE LTE

Cutting methane pollution from the oil and gas industry is the quickest, most cost effective way to slow the rate of climate change happening now and protect communities' health. That is why I am grateful for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed updated draft rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from oil and gas operations across the country. My family has waited too long for bold action to cut methane, and we need these protections now more than ever.

[INSERT PERSONAL ANECDOTE ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT ON YOUR COMMUNITY, HEALTH, ETC.]

This proposal builds on the [draft rule released by EPA in 2021](#), and will help keep families like mine safe and healthy. We asked for bold and immediate action to cut methane, and the Biden administration listened.

Now, EPA must move quickly to enact solutions for pollution and finalize the strongest possible safeguards. Every day that passes without strong federal methane rules is a missed opportunity to reduce climate and air pollution from the oil and gas industry and protect the health and wellbeing of communities across this country. We cannot continue to wait.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENT

There is opportunity to provide written public comment **until February 13th**

Full instructions are available [here](#) and cut and pasted below:

Email: a-and-r-docket@epa.gov. Include Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2021-0317 in the subject line of the message.

Fax: (202) 566-9744. Label your fax: Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-20210317.

Mail: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Docket Center, Docket ID No. EPAHQ-OAR-2021-0317, Mail Code 28221T, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460.

SOCIAL GUIDANCE

General/Reaction

- .@EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane from the oil & gas sector is an important step forward for millions of people living on the frontlines of oil & gas development & key to

addressing the #ClimateCrisis. @EPA must finalize the strongest safeguards possible ASAP [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

- BREAKING: We asked @EPA & @POTUS for strong federal safeguards to #CutMethane & they listened. Now, we must finalize the strongest safeguards possible to protect our communities & #ActOnClimate. There is no time to waste. More → [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

Guidance for Members/Electeds

- .@EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane pollution from the oil & gas industry will protect communities across [\[STATE\]](#) & hold polluters accountable. It's time to finalize the strongest safeguards possible. [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)
- For too long, the health & wellbeing of [\[STATE\]](#) families has been undermined by methane pollution from the oil & gas industry. @EPA is working to change that with a new proposal to #CutMethane. It's time to finalize the strongest protections possible. [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

Public Health

- Methane pollution from the oil & gas sector is a #PublicHealth threat – especially for folks on the frontlines of oil & gas development. @EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane will protect these communities, & help keep EVERYONE's air clean & safe to breathe. [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

Climate

- Working to #CutMethane pollution from the oil & gas industry is one of the most effective tools we have to #ActOnClimate. That's why @EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane is so important. It's time to finalize the strongest safeguards possible. #NoTimeToWaste [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

Environmental Justice/Frontline Communities

- .@EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane pollution from the oil & gas industry will protect & empower communities on the frontlines of oil & gas development across the country. It's time to put #PeopleOverPolluters & finalize the strongest safeguards possible. [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)

Corporate Accountability

- For too long, polluters in the oil & gas industry have fueled the #ClimateCrisis & threatened the health & safety of communities across the country. @EPA's new proposal to #CutMethane would put #PeopleOverPolluters at last. It's time for accountability. [\[LINK TO EPA RELEASE\]](#)