



## Media Tip Sheet

### EPA Methane Pollution Standards for the Oil and Gas Industry New and Existing Source Rules

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*This week, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expected to release methane pollution standards for new and existing sources in the oil and gas industry. In a bipartisan vote earlier this year, Congress restored Obama-era regulations that had been invalidated by the Trump Administration. The forthcoming rules are expected to go beyond those rules in an effort to reduce dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and meet the Administration's climate commitments.*

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#### How did we get here?

Obama-era [methane regulations](#) released in 2016 covered new pollution sources in the oil and gas industry, but not existing sources. EPA began exploring regulations for existing sources, but the process was halted by the Trump Administration. In 2018, the Trump EPA proposed [new leak detection and repair standards](#) for existing sources that would reduce inspection frequency. In 2019, the EPA proposed an [additional rollback](#), modifying the Obama-era rules, which targeted volatile organic compounds, rather than methane, and exempted the transmission and storage sectors entirely.

A day-one executive order from the Biden Administration, [EO 13990](#), directed the EPA to review the Trump administration's methane emission rules and promulgate new methane regulations for the oil and gas industry. In June of 2021, a [bipartisan Congressional Review Act](#) (CRA) vote in Congress repealed the Trump EPA rules and set the stage for existing source rules to be implemented once again. EPA is [expected to release](#) new and existing source methane emission regulations for the oil and gas industry in the coming days. The announcement coincides with the Administration's participation in the COP 26 Climate Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, and [supports their efforts to demonstrate global leadership](#) in combating the climate crisis.

#### Why regulate methane emissions?

Methane is an important piece of the global warming puzzle, particularly in the near term. It's the second-most plentiful greenhouse gas in the atmosphere after carbon dioxide. And it's responsible for 30% of current warming, according to an [April report from the United Nations'](#) climate science body. Because it is 86 times more climate-forcing than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20-year time frame, experts say that cutting methane in the short term will buy the world valuable time to make the structural economic changes needed to avoid the worst climate impacts.

Methane pollution directly contributes to health complications and reducing methane leaks also reduces the leaking of [associated gasses that are dangerous](#) to humans such as hazardous air pollutants (HAP's). Ozone, or "smog," is formed when VOCs and nitrous oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) react in sunlight. Methane is a VOC, but it also reacts in the atmosphere to create other VOCs that are very likely to produce ozone. Ozone [exacerbates breathing difficulties](#) caused by respiratory conditions such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, or [even coronavirus symptoms](#).

The oil and gas industry is one of the nation's [largest sources of methane pollution](#). Operators leak and vent methane into the atmosphere when they extract, store and transport oil and gas throughout the supply chain. U.S. oil and gas companies [emit more than 13 million metric tons](#) of methane per year. If captured, this pollution could fuel 10 million homes for a year and is worth an estimated \$2 billion.

The International Energy Agency estimates that worldwide, the oil and gas industry can achieve a [75% reduction in methane emissions](#) using technologies available today — two-thirds of it at no net cost.

Support for reducing oil and gas methane emissions is widespread and bipartisan. Groups ranging from EDF to large operators, like BP and Shell, to the American Petroleum Institute (API) have expressed support for new rules to curb the industry's wasteful methane releases. A recent poll found [91 percent of Westerners](#) support requiring companies to prevent methane leaks in their equipment and facilities.

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*The [Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states. Many WORC members live on lands overlying and neighboring federal, tribal, state and privately-owned oil and gas deposits, and experience numerous impacts due to federal oil and gas production. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.*