

Public Statement on U.S. EPA New Draft Methane Rules

November 2, 2021

Background:

Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released two new draft methane rules. The proposed new Clean Air Act rules are meant to aggressively contain the release of this climate-warming pollutant, which is the second-most plentiful greenhouse gas in the atmosphere after carbon dioxide and is responsible for 30% of current warming, according to the United Nations' [climate science body](#). The new rules would lead to significant, cost-effective reductions in methane emissions and other health-harming air pollutants that endanger nearby communities.

As part of today's action, to inform a supplemental proposal, EPA is seeking comment on additional sources of methane to further strengthen emission controls and increase reductions from oil and gas operations. EPA is issuing the proposal in response to President Biden's Executive Order on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis.

The EPA's press release can be viewed [here](#).

Statement from the Environmental Health Project:

The Environmental Health Project applauds the EPA's efforts to reduce methane emissions from oil and gas sources. Because strong methane rules help to control the warming of the planet, they also protect public health. Keeping rising temperatures in check reduces the likelihood that people across the nation will suffer heat-related health issues, contract insect-borne diseases, and experience respiratory illnesses. Protective actions such as this also reduce health threats caused by deadly floods, fires, and storms, which increase in severity with climate change.

The EPA's new methane rules also provide the groundwork for Pennsylvania to approve a strong methane rule of its own. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf can now keep his promise and instruct his Department of Environmental Protection to move forward with a strong methane rule and close the loophole that allows low-producing oil and gas wells to pollute unchecked. These low-producing wells account for nearly half of the methane released by wells annually in our state. Closing that loophole will reduce the methane and accompanying toxic chemicals these wells emit, in turn reducing the risk of respiratory illnesses, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and poor birth outcomes for tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians living in proximity to oil and gas operations.

Alison L. Steele, Executive Director
Environmental Health Project