

July 27, 2026

Pennsylvania Rulemaking for Methane Emissions

Background

On July 24, 2026, the Shapiro administration published its regulatory agenda in the [Pennsylvania Bulletin](#). Part of this agenda included a state-level rulemaking process for controlling methane emissions from certain components of oil and gas infrastructure, including both existing and new sources of emissions at well sites and production facilities. The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had previously [planned to reference federal methane requirements](#) in the state permitting process, instead of creating Pennsylvania-specific standards. However, the Trump administration has [significantly weakened and delayed enforcement of the federal methane rule](#). The Shapiro administration's decision to implement a formal rulemaking at the state level makes use of Pennsylvania authority to establish a methane rule that will exist independently of federal regulations.

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas with a climate-warming potential [80-times higher than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period](#). It is released when oil and gas equipment leaks, when gases are intentionally vented into the atmosphere, and during flaring. A variety of toxic co-pollutants, such as volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxides, almost always accompany methane emissions. More than three dozen epidemiological studies have correlated proximity to methane-emitting facilities with a range of adverse health outcomes, including [chronic heart and respiratory illnesses, pregnancy and birth complications, and cancer](#). Additionally, climate change resulting from methane emissions across the globe [puts communities at greater risk of additional health issues](#), such as [insect-borne diseases](#), [heat-related illnesses](#), as well as injuries and deaths from storms, floods, and wildfires.

EHP's Statement

We applaud the Shapiro administration for taking steps toward developing independent, durable state regulations to reduce methane emissions from oil and gas facilities, thus protecting the health of those who live, work, and play nearby. Nearly [1.5 million Pennsylvanians](#) live within half a mile of oil and gas facilities, such as wells, compressor stations, and processing facilities. Both unintentional leaks and planned releases from oil and gas sites pose health risks, in part because they emit methane and other toxic compounds that are harmful to humans and the environment. For these reasons, it is essential that Pennsylvania creates a strong, health-protective methane rule that is based on reliable public health research.

Based on what we know about the health risks of these facilities and about [Pennsylvania's historically lenient policies governing the shale gas industry](#), a “strong” rule would include aspects such as frequent, verified, mandatory inspections using a leak detection and repair program; requirements to install sophisticated pollution control equipment; robust enforcement mechanisms; and significant penalties for violations. Because [methane leaks are a risk with low-producing wells](#) and high-producing wells alike, as well as with both conventional and unconventional wells, all of these categories should be held to similarly strict standards. Given the significant health harms posed by intentional methane releases, such as flaring and venting, there should be strict and explicit language governing those activities as well.

Limiting methane emissions will help to limit health harms from localized pollution and global climate impacts, alike. Since the nation's strongest federal methane protections have now been gutted by the Environmental Protection Agency, it is essential that Pennsylvania's leadership steps in to fill that gap, thereby protecting our residents with rules that stand independently from the shifting political landscape in Washington. By grounding the forthcoming regulations in state authority, Governor Shapiro's administration can lay a solid foundation for public health protections that have impact and longevity.

About the Environmental Health Project

The [Environmental Health Project](#) (EHP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public health organization that defends public health in the face of shale gas development. EHP provides frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance while engaging diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, policy makers, and others.