



IMPORTANT NEW PROTECTIONS FOR AIR POLLUTION FROM HYDRAULIC FRACTURING AND OTHER OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS

On July 28th the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed new controls on emissions of hazardous air pollutants from oil and gas operations. This proposal is significant because it is the first time that federal authority has been used to address hydraulic fracturing gas drilling operations.

Addressing air emissions from “fracking” operations is essential. Each year 30,000 new wells are fractured. These wells are a major health hazard and annually spew 500,000 tons of smog-causing volatile organic compounds (VOCs), the super greenhouse gas methane and know carcinogens like benzene into our air.

The proposed rule will:

- Reduce VOC emissions by 54,000 tons, including a 95% reduction from fracking operations alone;
- Cut methane emissions by 3.4 million tons, which is equivalent to 65 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂), and
- Reduce air toxics emissions by 38,000 tons, a 30% industry reduction

The rule is a win-win because it will save the oil and gas industry money. The same technology that captures harmful pollution also catches natural gas that is usually wasted; it is estimated that overall oil and gas operations will save at least \$30 million annually. The technology required for this capture is already mandated in several states and has been proven to be cost-effective.

Clean Water Action is also recommending improvements in the rule, including:

- Directly regulating methane
- Requiring the use of best available technology in all oil and gas operations
- Improving monitoring, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements
- Regulating all significant emissions sources like “frac pits.”
- Regulating all relevant air pollutants, especially hydrogen sulfide
- Prohibiting “flaring” or burn-off un-captured gas.

EPA is accepting public comment on the rule until October 23rd, and has scheduled three field hearings on this rule. (Pittsburgh PA 9/27, Denver CO 9/28 and Arlington TX 9/29). A wide show of public support for this rule is critical not only for its overall reductions in hazardous air pollution but because it is the first time that the Federal government is playing a role in protecting public health and natural resources from the impacts of hydraulic fracturing natural gas drilling.

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