



THE THREAT OF OIL & GAS POLLUTION

Wyoming

Methane, the primary component of gas, is an invisible, odorless greenhouse gas that is a powerful driver of climate change – 87 times as powerful as carbon dioxide during the time it remains in the atmosphere.¹ The oil and gas sector is the largest source of methane in the U.S., leaking or intentionally venting large quantities of this dangerous pollutant into our air every day. In 2014, the oil and gas industry emitted over 9.8 million metric tons of methane, a number 34% higher than previous estimates.² The near-term climate impact of these emissions is equal to the pollution caused by more than 200 coal-fired power plants over 20 years.

Along with methane, oil and gas facilities often release other air pollutants that can harm our health, including formaldehyde, benzene, acetaldehyde, and ethyl benzene. These toxins can cause cancer, respiratory symptoms, anemia, brain damage and birth defects, eye irritation, and blood and neurological disorders.

THE THREAT RADIUS

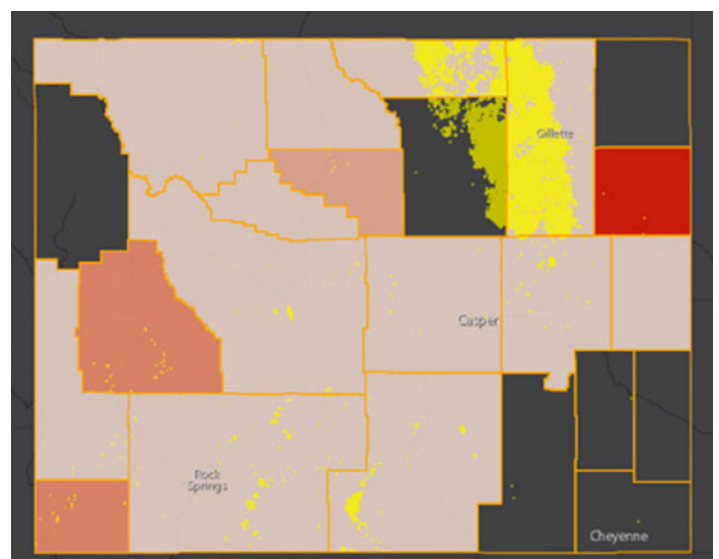
Peer-reviewed studies have documented higher levels of harmful air pollutants in and around areas with oil and gas production activity, and have shown that oil and gas facilities are the source of the excess pollution. Research indicates links between risks and/or prevalence of disease and proximity to facilities.³ The half mile “threat radius” is a very conservative estimate of the area within which higher levels of toxic pollution are seen, and the distance within which health impacts have most clearly been correlated with the presence of oil and gas facilities.⁴

There are currently 12.4 million people living within a half mile of one of 1,193,118 active oil and gas wells, compressors, and processors in the United States. In total, 184,578 square miles are covered by the threat radius⁵, which includes 11,543 schools and 639 medical facilities. Nationwide, 238 counties in 21 states face a cancer risk that

exceeds EPA’s one-in-a-million threshold level of concern, including one county in Wyoming, Weston County.⁶

OIL & GAS THREATENS WYOMINGITES

Wyoming was in two of the fifteen highest methane-emitting basins in the country in 2014 - the Green River Basin and the Denver Basin. The Green River Basin was the eighth highest methane emitting oil- and gas-producing basin in 2014, emitting 2,375,566 metric tons of carbon



MAP: OILANDGASTHREATMAP.COM/THREAT-MAP/WYOMING

dioxide equivalent from 11,790 wells—a rate of 201 metric tons per well. In addition to Weston County exceeding EPA’s cancer risk level of concern, two counties, Sublette and Uinta were in the highest 10% for county cancer risk.

The state’s oil and gas producers reported polluting almost 130,000 metric tons of methane in 2014. Practically 70% of Wyoming’s oil and gas production takes place on the state’s federal and tribal owned lands, and in 2013 more than \$42 million worth of gas was emitted on these lands.⁷

THE NUMBERS⁸

TOTAL POPULATION Living in the Threat Radius (within a half mile of a facility)	25 thousand
TOTAL NUMBER of Active Oil and Gas Wells, Compressors, and Processors	38,909
NUMBER OF COUNTIES that Exceed EPA’s Cancer Risk Level of Concern	1 Weston County
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS in the Threat Radius	16
NUMBER OF MEDICAL FACILITIES in the Threat Radius	1
SQUARE MILES COVERED by the Threat Radius	4,893

STRONG FEDERAL STANDARDS ARE KEY

Wyoming has taken steps towards reducing methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by requiring companies to regularly monitor for and repair leaks. However, these requirements do not go nearly far enough to protect communities from air pollution from the oil and gas industry. Strong nationwide standards are critical to addressing this issue.

ENDNOTES

- http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg1/WG1AR5_Chapter08_FINAL.pdf
- <https://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/Downloads/ghgemissions/US-GHG-Inventory-2016-Main-Text.pdf>
- <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1306722/>
- <http://oilandgasthreatmap.com/about/threat/>
- <http://oilandgasthreatmap.com/threat-map/>
- <http://oilandgasthreatmap.com/threat-map/wyoming/>
- <http://www.methanefacts.org/files/2015/11/Methane-fact-sheet-WyomingFINAL.pdf>
- <http://oilandgasthreatmap.com/threat-map/wyoming/>

On May 12, 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the first-ever federal standards addressing new and modified sources of methane pollution from the oil and gas sector. These standards require, among other things, that companies regularly monitor for and repair leaks.⁹ The EPA expects this rule to cut 510,000 tons of methane pollution from oil and gas facilities and equipment, the emissions equivalent of 11 coal-fired power plants or taking 8.5 million cars off the road every year.¹⁰ These standards will also significantly impact public health by curbing emissions of smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and toxic air pollutants.

The 2016 standards were an important first step, but in 2018, nearly 90% of methane emissions will come from existing sources not covered by this rule.¹¹ Strong methane standards for both new *and existing* sources are key to the Administration’s ability to meet its Paris climate commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025.¹² Therefore, the EPA must develop strong and effective standards for existing sources as soon as possible, both to meet its legal commitments and to protect public health and welfare. **Without strong standards on existing sources, millions of people — including the 25 thousand in Wyoming within the threat radius — will continue to be at risk.**

COMMON-SENSE SOLUTIONS ARE READILY AVAILABLE

Thankfully, common-sense solutions exist not only to clean-up and fix methane leaks, but to boost local economies as well. More than 500 locations in 46 states are already manufacturing the equipment and providing the services needed to reduce methane pollution, **including 19 locations in Wyoming.** These businesses are helping to grow the local economy by creating highly skilled, good-paying jobs.¹³

- <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-releases-first-ever-standards-cut-methane-emissions-oil-and-gas-sector>
- <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-releases-first-ever-standards-cut-methane-emissions-oil-and-gas-sector>
- https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/methane_cost_curve_report.pdf
- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/31/fact-sheet-us-reports-its-2025-emissions-target-unfccc>
- https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/us_methane_mitigation_industry_report.pdf

APPENDIX

WY Counties	Total Population	Threatened Population	Number of Facilities	Threatened Schools	Threatened Medical Facilities	Threatened Square Miles	Other Risks
Campbell County	46,133	22,895	23,364	10	0	2,621.21	
Sheridan County	29,116	1,642	6,271	3	1	757.79	
Johnson County	8,569	536	7,801	1	0	1,064.68	
Uinta County	21,118	536	26	0	0	15.97	County Cancer Risk in highest 10%
Sweetwater County	43,806	92	307	2	0	122.54	
Natrona County	75,450	50	17	0	0	9.06	
Carbon County	15,885	27	763	0	0	160.31	
Converse County	13,833	14	198	0	0	62.38	
Big Horn County	11,668	7	3	0	0	2.36	
Washakie County	8,533	7	5	0	0	3.93	
Albany County	36,299	6	2	0	0	1.57	
Fremont County	40,123	5	95	0	0	31.57	
Weston County	7,208	3	3	0	0	2.35	Exceeds EPA level of concern for cancer risk*
Laramie County	91,738	1	1	0	0	0.79	
Crook County	7,083	0	0	0	0	0.00	
Goshen County	13,249	0	0	0	0	0.00	
Hot Springs County	4,812	0	0	0	0	0.00	
Lincoln County	18,106	0	13	0	0	8.80	
Niobrara County	2,484	0	0	0	0	0.00	
Park County	28,205	0	12	0	0	7.24	
Platte County	8,667	0	1	0	0	0.79	
Sublette County	10,247	0	27	0	0	19.91	County Cancer Risk in highest 10%
Teton County	21,294	0	0	0	0	0.00	

*County-wide average cancer risk is equal to or greater than 1 in 1 million.