



Rolling Back Clean Air Act Methane Regulations for the Oil and Gas Industry. The Next Step in the Overhaul of the Biden Administration's Oil and Gas Rules.

On March 12, 2025, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) that the agency is reconsidering the Biden administration's regulations for the oil and gas industry under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act and Subpart W of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program.

The latest step in that reconsideration came in the form of [proposed regulatory revisions](#) that were published in the Federal Register on Oct. 29, 2026. The [fact sheet](#) published by the EPA states in part that "The proposal is expected to deliver \$45 billion in savings and unleash an estimated additional 210 million barrels of U.S. oil production and over 1.4 trillion cubic square feet of U.S. natural gas," and the fact sheet provides a [summary of the timeline](#) for the administration's reconsideration of the Biden-era rules.

The Five Proposed Rule Changes

1. **Certain Well Sites:** EPA is proposing two options to create separate categories and standards for well sites. The first option would categorize well sites by production level, marginal or non-marginal. The second option would categorize them by resource type, conventional or unconventional.
2. **Super Emitter Program:** EPA is proposing to rescind the program that certified third-party monitors for so-called "super emitter" leak events and required states to do the same.
3. **Covers and Closed Vent Systems:** EPA is proposing to split the "No Identifiable Emissions" aspect of covers and closed vent systems into design requirements

and operational requirements. The operational requirements would allow for repairs.

4. **Associated Gas:** EPA is proposing to restore 95%-efficient flaring or other control devices as the best system of emission reduction, rather than requiring all associated natural gas coming from oil wells to reach a sales line.
5. **Control Devices:** EPA is proposing technical changes to give flexibility for flame monitoring data deviations, control device alerts, and visible emissions test conditions where appropriate.

Critiques Galore.

Having read multiple articles both “for and against” the proposals, I found that the Oct. 29, 2026, [article by Scientific American](#) is perhaps the most balanced and instructive. Here is my summary of that article’s “five things to know” about the proposals.

1. **Methane is a major climate driver.** Though less abundant than CO₂, methane has driven about 30% of global warming since the Industrial Revolution (per the International Energy Agency). It’s shorter-lived in the atmosphere (about 12 years vs. centuries for CO₂) but traps heat roughly 80 times more effectively than CO₂ over 20 years and 28 times as effectively over a century.
2. **Oil and gas leaks are a major methane source.** Of the approximately 580 million metric tons of methane released annually, about 60% comes from human activity. Agriculture is the top anthropogenic source, with oil and gas production, processing, and transport ranking second – responsible for 28% of U.S. methane emissions.
3. **Regulations haven’t moved the needle much.** Research conducted by Communications Earth & Environment, led by Johns Hopkins’ Scot Miller, using satellite data found methane emissions fell about 11% from 2019–2024, but this was driven mainly by industry technology changes and new pipeline infrastructure, not federal regulation, because operators have more incentive to capture gas when it’s profitable to sell rather than flare.
4. **New rules loosen restrictions on common wells.** The EPA plans to scrap the never-implemented “Super Emitter Program.” That program would have let third parties flag large leaks via satellite. Significantly, the proposals will ease rules for

“marginal wells” (e., those that produce 15 barrels of oil or less per day, or 90,000 cubic feet of gas or less per day). Marginal wells make up over 70% of onshore wells and account for about half of industry methane emissions, despite accounting for only 7% of production. Low profitability gives operators little incentive to fix leaks at these wells.

5. **There’s broad pushback against methane regulation globally.** The Biden-era rules (2023) were projected to prevent 58 million tons of methane emissions from 2024–2038, but their rollback by the Trump administration is part of a wider trend worldwide. For example, the European Union recently delayed a methane monitoring / reporting rule for imports by three years, and the U.S. Senate-bound Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act could block future administrations from easily reinstating methane limits on public lands.

Conclusion

A [statement from Taxpayers for Common Sense](#) expresses another position:

True energy dominance means getting full value from our energy resources, not squandering them through preventable waste. EPA should be making sure more American natural gas reaches the market instead of going up in smoke.

Methane waste is a lose-lose-lose. It depletes American resources, drains revenue from federal and state budgets, and adds health and safety risks for nearby communities. Weakening common sense methane standards would only make matters worse.

Any proposal that takes us in that direction is fiscally irresponsible and fails taxpayers, American consumers, and local communities.

No matter the opposing editorial positions, the continuing regulatory “flip-flop,” “seesawing,” and “whiplash” have a multitude of impacts. The regulatory uncertainty chills capital investment and erodes investor confidence, paralyzes long-term operational planning and disrupts operational continuity, and may stifle innovation.

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