



NEWS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

August 14, 2026

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

NMED proposes methane rule to prevent natural gas waste Proposed rule helps find major leaks faster and cut air pollution

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department yesterday filed a proposed methane rule with the Environmental Improvement Board that would help reduce air pollution, prevent wasted natural gas and allow major leaks to be found and repaired more quickly.

The proposed Methane Rule, 20.2.51 NMAC, would create a new state program to identify large methane leaks from oil and gas operations. It would also update state requirements for certain oil and gas equipment to better align with federal standards.

“Methane leaks result in climate change, air pollution and waste of New Mexico’s natural resources,” said **Environment Secretary James Kenney**. “This regulatory proposal builds on New Mexico’s nationally-leading oil and gas rules and will result in oil and gas operators finding larger leaks faster, fixing them, and keep more natural gas where it belongs — in the pipeline.”

Under the proposed rule, NMED would approve qualified third parties to use technologies such as satellites and aircraft to identify major methane leaks. When a possible large leak is detected, NMED would notify nearby oil and gas operators and require them to investigate.

If an operator finds a leak, it would be required to repair it and report the results to NMED. Investigations and repairs would generally need to be completed within three days of notification.

Finding leaks faster would reduce methane emissions while helping oil and gas operators avoid losing natural gas that could otherwise be sold. It would also help protect state revenue tied to oil and gas production.

The proposal would also update requirements for equipment used to control oil and gas operations. New Mexico already requires many of these devices to be upgraded so they no longer

release natural gas into the air. The proposed rule would expand those requirements over time and align them with federal standards by 2031.

If New Mexico takes no action on climate change between now and 2050, it faces an estimated \$294 billion in cumulative costs from infrastructure damage, health impacts and agricultural losses.

The proposal builds on several major air quality initiatives advanced during Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's administration:

- In 2022, New Mexico adopted its **Ozone Precursor Rule**, requiring oil and gas operators to reduce pollutants that contribute to ground-level ozone while also significantly reducing methane emissions.
- In 2023, New Mexico adopted **stronger clean vehicle standards for passenger cars and heavy-duty trucks** to reduce tailpipe pollution and increase the availability of lower- and zero-emission vehicles in the state.
- In January 2026, New Mexico adopted new **Regional Haze requirements** to reduce pollution that impairs visibility in national parks and wilderness areas across the state.
- In April 2026, New Mexico launched its **Clean Transportation Fuel Program**, creating a market-based program designed to reduce pollution from transportation fuels while encouraging investment in cleaner fuel options.

Together, these efforts target two of New Mexico's largest sources of air pollution — oil and gas production and transportation — while supporting cleaner technologies, more efficient use of energy resources and the state's broader climate goals.

The proposal now goes before the Environmental Improvement Board, which will consider whether to hold a public hearing on the rule.

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