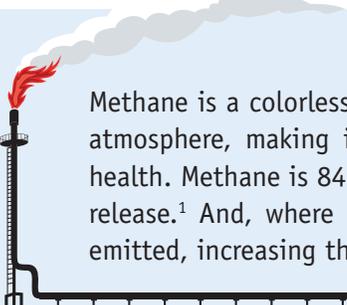


# METHANE POLLUTION IN PENNSYLVANIA

## What is Methane Pollution?



Methane is a colorless, odorless gas and is the primary component of shale gas. Methane traps heat in the atmosphere, making it a powerful greenhouse gas that accelerates climate change and impacts public health. Methane is 84 times more dangerous, on average, than carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after its release.<sup>1</sup> And, where methane is leaked, vented, or flared, harmful volatile organic compounds are also emitted, increasing the risk of health impacts for families located both nearby and far away.

From the International Panel on the Climate Crisis (IPCC)<sup>2</sup> to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),<sup>3</sup> groups around the world have acknowledged the critical importance of addressing methane pollution now to avert the most dire climate crisis predictions. Quickly and significantly reducing methane pollution is one of the best levers we have to slow the rate of climate change and help clean up the air to protect children's health.



Despite this clear call to action, and Pennsylvania's outsized responsibility to act because it is the second largest shale gas producer in the nation,<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania has some of the weakest methane regulations in the country.

**HealthFirstPA's partner organizations are working with the EPA to create federal methane rules. These rules would give all children baseline safeguards across the nation and would offer frontline Pennsylvania families much-needed protections.**

“As a resident living in the frack-zone of Pennsylvania, I am concerned for the health of my family as we are surrounded by natural gas drilling from well pads to pipelines and the processing plants that support the industry.”

— Cathy L. Bulgar, PA

## How does methane pollution impact the health of our families?



Climate change severely impacts the health of Pennsylvanians:<sup>6</sup>

- Increases in extreme weather cause more flooding in the state, leading to damage to homes, death, and emotional distress for families.<sup>7</sup>
  - Extreme weather causes adverse health impacts for families due to disruptions in access to medications and emergency healthcare, as well as routine doctor visits for individuals with existing health conditions.
  - Extreme weather impacts disproportionately affect lower income families and people of color.

[more information](#) 

continued

## How does methane pollution impact the health of our families?

- Increases in the number of severe heat days cause more incidents of heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and death in vulnerable populations, as well as creating heat islands in cities.<sup>8</sup> Methane pollution not only leads to higher temperatures but also leads to higher rates of ground level ozone, which causes increases in asthma attacks.
- Warmer winters have triggered an increase in the tick population, contributing to a tripling in the number of Lyme disease cases in Pennsylvania from just 10 years ago. This increase in Lyme disease is resulting in millions of dollars of healthcare costs, lost wages for families, and illness management impacts for people with the disease.<sup>9,10</sup>



Strong, comprehensive EPA methane rules will also have the benefit of decreasing the associated air pollutants that are emitted along with methane. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as benzene, can be released throughout the oil and gas supply chain. Dozens of studies have shown that people living in proximity to oil and gas operations have an increased risk of health issues, including:<sup>11</sup>

- adverse birth outcomes
- heart disease
- cancers
- asthma attacks and other respiratory problems.

**With 1.5 million Pennsylvanians living within a half mile of an active oil and gas facility, and 300,000 children attending schools and daycares within a half mile of an oil and gas facility, the time to act is now.**<sup>12</sup>

## What can you do about it?

Sign a petition urging the U.S. EPA to act on increasing methane pollution protections today.

**As Pennsylvanians work with the EPA to create methane pollution safeguards, Pennsylvania must also work to become a leader on methane regulation to protect the health of Pennsylvania families and our children's future. HealthfirstPA continues to work to educate Pennsylvania lawmakers on the impacts of methane pollution on climate change and public health.**

### ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON THIS ISSUE:



1 [https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/methane\\_studies\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/methane_studies_fact_sheet.pdf)

2 [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_SPM\\_final.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM_final.pdf)

3 <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/EPA-HQ-OAR-2021-0317>

4 <https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=PA>

5 <https://www.epa.gov/gmi/importance-methane>

6 <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/elibrary/GetDocument?docId=3667348&DocName=PENNSYLVANIA%20CLIMATE%20IMPACTS%20ASSESSMENT%202021.PDF>

7 <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/flooding-and-climate-change-everything-you-need-know>

8 <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/climate-change-and-heat-islands>

9 <https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Air/AirQuality/AQPortalFiles/RGGI/FINAL%20RGGI%20101%20Webinar.pdf>

10 [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Lyme/Lyme%20Disease%20in%20Pennsylvania%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Lyme/Lyme%20Disease%20in%20Pennsylvania%20(2).pdf)

11 <https://www.moms-clean-air-force.org/oil-gas-babys-health/>

12 <https://oilandgasthreatmap.com/threat-map/pennsylvania/>