

Environment & Energy

New Mexico Rule Requires Oil, Gas Operators to Cut Emissions (1)

By Zach Bright

April 14, 2022, 3:42 PM; Updated: April 14, 2022, 5:53 PM

- Targets precursors to ozone to improve air quality
 - Set leak monitoring requirements for oil and gas companies
-

Oil and gas companies in New Mexico will have to reduce harmful emissions to improve air quality under a new requirement, the state Environment Department announced Thursday.

The new rule passed by the state's Environmental Improvement Board aims to lower the organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen that are precursors to ozone. Although the gas makes up the protective ozone layer that absorbs most ultraviolet rays in the atmosphere, breathing in ground-level ozone can cause breathing issues, asthma attacks, and even early death, according to the American Lung Association.

The air quality improvements mean oil and gas corporations will need to set emission reduction requirements for equipment from compressors to storage vessels and also an array of operational processes. They also mean operators must calculate and certify emissions, perform monthly leak checks and repairs, and maintain compliance records.

New Mexico's Environment Department estimates the regulation will reduce precursor gases by 260 million pounds annually and means a complementary reduction of more than 851 million pounds of methane each year. It's technology neutral, allowing for innovations like satellites, air ships, drones, and fence-line monitoring to catch any leaks, according to the agency.

For New Mexico counties with high ozone levels, compliance will start this summer.

Camilla Feibelman of the Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club called it "an important step toward protecting New Mexicans from the acute and long-term impacts of oil and gas pollution," while the Environmental Defense Fund's Jon Goldstein said the rules "represent historic progress."

The New Mexico Oil and Gas Association “participated in the NMED’s efforts to regulate ozone precursors, even though the oil & gas industry contributes less than 3 parts per billion of ozone out of the roughly 75 parts per billion that exists today,” the association’s president and CEO, Gene Ackerman, said in a statement. “We expect this new rule to reduce emissions, but as our experts testified, will have extremely limited impact on ozone emissions.”

The Sierra Club has received funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charitable organization founded by Michael Bloomberg. Bloomberg Law is operated by entities controlled by Michael Bloomberg.

(Updates with comments from New Mexico Oil and Gas Association president.)

To contact the reporter on this story: Zach Bright at zbright@bloombergindustry.com

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Chuck McCutcheon at cmccutcheon@bloombergindustry.com

Related Articles

[New Mexico Proposes Air Quality Rule for Oil and Gas Industry](#) May 6, 2021, 3:51 PM

[New Mexico Oil and Gas to Face 98% Methane Capture Requirement](#) March 25, 2021, 11:26 AM

Topics

oil and gas
aerial drones

© 2022 The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. All Rights Reserved