

## Valentine, Velvet, EMNRD

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**From:** Davidson, Florene, EMNRD  
**Sent:** Friday, January 8, 2021 3:04 PM  
**To:** Valentine, Velvet, EMNRD  
**Subject:** FW: [EXT] Written Comment  
**Attachments:** OCD Public Comments on Regulations 1.8.21.pptx

Case 21528

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**From:** Barbara Webber <barbara@healthactionnm.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 8, 2021 2:50 PM  
**To:** Davidson, Florene, EMNRD <florene.davidson@state.nm.us>  
**Subject:** [EXT] Written Comment

Ms. Davidson,

Thank you to the Department for taking written comment on the draft rules on methane and waste mitigation.

I have attached my comments in slide form with data and sources also included.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Best wishes,

Barbara Webber

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We are all in this together!

Barbara K. Webber  
Executive Director

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**PROTECT OUR CARE, #keepNMcovered**

**Support bi-partisan solutions to improve the ACA and the US healthcare system.**

*Health Action NM is a non-profit, statewide consumer advocacy organization that works to ensure that all NM communities have access to quality, affordable and accountable medical/dental care.*

**Dental therapists** are locally trained dental professionals who provide quality, affordable, preventive and routine dental care services, and bring jobs and economic opportunities to all communities

You can also find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

***"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."***

**Martin Luther King**



Public Action for Oil & Gas Pollution and  
**Our Health**  
IN NEW MEXICO

BARBARA WEBBER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Written Public Comment  
Jan 8, 2021





## *NM's air quality is deteriorating!*

The America Lung Association (ALA)'s recent report gave Eddy, Lea and San Juan counties failing grades for ozone pollution and high ozone days.

Nearby counties did not fare much better.

The 5 NM counties home to 97% of the state's oil and gas are all at risk for violating the federal clean air standards.

Source: <http://www.stateoftheair.org/city-rankings/states/new-mexico/>  
<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/ozone/>



## Ozone pollution poses a serious health threat, especially for children, elders, and rural communities of color.

Oil and gas is responsible for 300,000 metrics tons of the compounds that turn into ozone smog every year.

- ▶ An extensive body of scientific research, including by the US Environmental Protection Agency demonstrates a causal or likely causal relationship between ozone exposure and respiratory distress, heart problems, premature death, strokes and neurological effects.
- ▶ Especially troubling given our current public health crisis and the CDC findings of the CDC that those with underlying respiratory and heart conditions are at great risk for worse outcomes of COVID-19

Data sources: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk.html)



In NM, 138,399 people live within ½ mile of 55,227 oil & gas facilities as do 99 schools and child care centers.



## Protecting our children's health.

- ▶ Asthma is now the most common non communicable disease in children in the US. In NM our asthma rate is higher than the national rate
- ▶ The highest ER visits and admissions due to asthma are in the Southeastern part of NM.





## Studies have found that living close to oil & gas facilities:

- ✓ Increases risk of congenital birth defects by 40 - 70%
- ✓ Increases low weight and pre-term babies 40% & 20%
- ✓ Increases life time risk of cancer by 8 times.

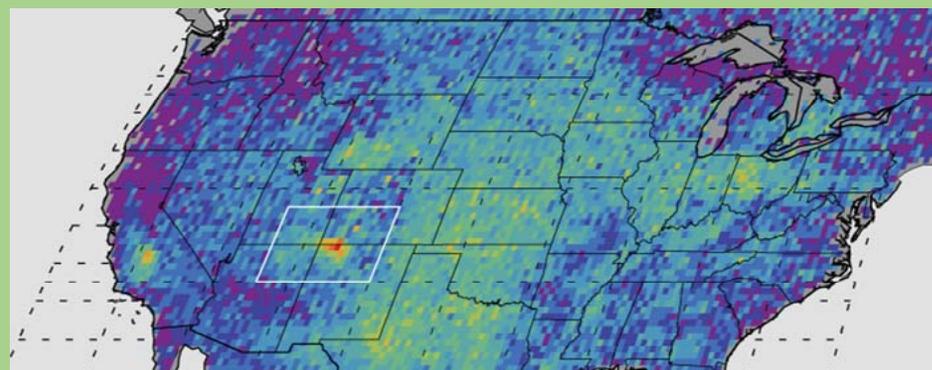
Source: <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP5842>

<https://www.aspph.org/colorado-study-living-near-oil-and-gas-facilities-may-have-higher-health-risks/>



# Native Americans disproportionately impacted by oil and gas pollution

- Navajo leaders and community members call on state and federal govt to limit oil and gas pollution, clean up our air.
- Ozone pollution from methane emissions threatens all New Mexicans, but disproportionately impacts children, Native Americans and those living in poor, rural communities.
- More than half of all Native Americans in San Juan County – about 24,600 people – live within a mile of a wellsite.



Images, clockwise from top left: Earthworks, EDF, NASA



*Oil and Gas Operations Leak, Vent and Flare methane into the air.*

Methane is the principal component of natural gas.

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas responsible for more than a 25% of climate change.

NM is home to some of worst methane pollution in the US.

Methane escapes from wells in the Permian Basin at a rate 3 times higher than the national average.

Source: <https://www.permianmap.org/>

# New Mexico and Methane

- NM leaks more than than 1 million metric ton of methane into the air every year - the equivalent of the carbon produced by 22 coal fired power plants
- A massive methane hotspot was discovered over the San Juan Basin by satellite, equivalent to the size of the state of Rhode Island

Source: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/media/press-releases/after-new-mexico-witnesses-speak-out-against-health-environmental-impacts-of-runaway-oil-and-gas-industry-chair-grijalva-eyes-new-federal-limits>



# Volatile organic compounds are gases released alongside methane as the key ingredient of smog or ozone

Benzene is of these gases which is a known carcinogen as well as others that cause serious neurological disorders.

Exposure of even 1 hour can cause cardiac arrhythmias.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/234066673>



Adding insult to injury, the Trump administration has accelerated its campaign against environmental and health regulation even in the administration's final days.

Just this month, the EPA gutted federal methane regulations.

This follows three years of rolling back to environmental regulations.

## The Good News: oil and gas developers have solutions at their disposal:

- Infrared cameras to find and fix leaks
- Companies can install state of the art technologies that emit little or no air emissions
- Companies can develop gas capture plans before development so air and methane emissions are not an afterthought

## Gov. Lujan Grisham: Climate change a core issue of her administration

- As Gov. Lujan Grisham outlined in her 2019 Executive Order on Addressing Climate Change and Energy Waste Prevention, climate change creates new risks and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in communities across New Mexico and presents growing challenges for human health and safety, quality of life and the rate of economic growth.
- The state is committed to a coordinated, interagency strategy to support the 2015 Paris Agreement goals and achieve a statewide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 45 percent by 2030 as compared to 2005 levels.



# NM Air Pollution and Methane Draft Rules

While we appreciate the hard work that NMED and EMNRD have done to date, the agencies should make changes to:

- close loopholes and eliminate exemptions in their draft air pollution and methane rules,
- guarantee reporting including to the public.
- provide sufficient funding for necessary inspections, oversight and enforcement.
- Coordinate with the Department of Health to expand current health data related to the impact of oil and gas pollution.

While waste mitigation is important, essential is protecting New Mexico's most important resource, its people, especially children, elders and communities of color.

Thank you, Commissioners for this opportunity to provide written comment.

Barbara K. Webber  
Executive Director  
Health Action New Mexico

