

METHANE & FLARING MYTH VS. FACT

Below are common myths about methane and flaring. The Texas Methane & Flaring Coalition has fact-checked these statements and provided helpful links below.

MYTH: Flaring is illegal.

- **FACT:** Flaring is allowed in Texas under the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) Statewide Rule 32 (SWR 32) in certain situations. SWR 32 delineates flaring options for operators to utilize when flaring is necessary. [You can learn more from the RRC here.](#)
- **FACT:** Flaring is authorized in the Texas Natural Resources Code (authorized in Chapter 86, mandated in Chapter 88).

MYTH: Methane is a volatile organic compound (VOC) that leads to the formation of ozone.

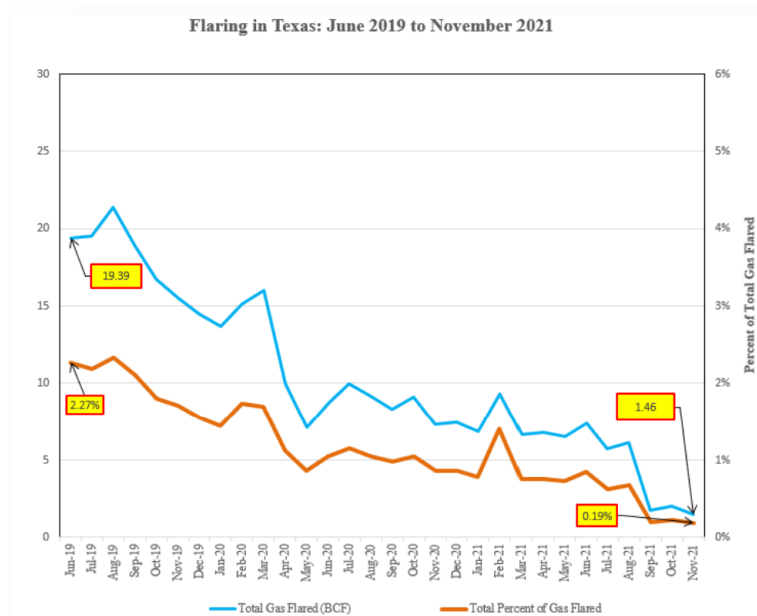
- **FACT:** While methane is technically a VOC, it is not a VOC that contributes to ozone formation. A chemistry teacher would consider methane to be a VOC, for example, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would not consider it to be, due to the fact that methane does not impact ozone formation.
- **FACT:** Methane emissions in the United States decreased by 23% since 1990. During this time period, methane emissions increased from sources associated with agricultural activities, while methane emissions decreased from sources associated with landfills, coal mining, and from natural gas and petroleum systems. ([EPA GHG Emissions Overview](#))

MYTH: Flaring causes birth defects and lung disease.

- **FACT:** A recent study was released that claimed flaring causes birth defects and lung disease; however, beyond listing several limitations of the study, the researchers also noted more study and research is needed to establish a link between flaring and preterm births.
- **FACT:** The researchers used proximity as a surrogate for exposure and assumed the correlation between health impact and proximity to flares equates to the health impact being caused by flares. Proximity studies have proven to be problematic and not useful for establishing causation.

MYTH: Flaring has increased over the past three years.

- **FACT:** Historically, flaring levels in Texas have been higher by volume and Texas has seen incredible progress in this space over the years.
- **FACT:** Data released by the RRC in January 2021 shows a continued trend down to a new low of 0.19% in November 2021 with natural gas production at 785 billion cubic feet.



MYTH: Flaring can be completely eliminated.

- **FACT:** Flaring cannot be eliminated completely as it is used to ensure the protection and safety of employees and the public. The option to flare must be available to operators to relieve excessive pressure that could result in safety or environmental consequences.

MYTH: Any emissions coming from an oil and natural gas facility signal danger and are evidence of massive pollution.

- **FACT:** Texas emissions of pollutants have decreased significantly. According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ([TCEQ](#)):
 - Between 2000 and 2018, VOC emissions decreased 48% and measured ground level ozone concentrations decreased 30%.
 - Between 2000 and 2018, sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions decreased 67%.
 - Between 2000 and 2018, nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions decreased 69% and measured ground level ozone concentrations decreased 30%.
- **FACT:** Emissions from any industrial facility must meet strict state and federal regulations. These regulations are developed to ensure that emissions are protective of human health and the environment.
- **FACT:** What appears to be smoke from industrial operations is typically condensation of water vapor.

MYTH: The oil and natural gas industry is unregulated.

- **FACT:** The oil and natural gas industry is strictly regulated at the state and federal levels. The following chart breaks down the [federal oversight](#):

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (FERC)	Regulates pipeline rates to encourage maximum use and regulates interstate transportation practices of oil and natural gas companies.	Visit FERC Online
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)	BLM regulates federal onshore land for oil and natural gas.	Visit BLM Online
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT (BOEM)	BOEM is responsible for providing leases for exploring federal offshore lands.	Visit BOEM online
BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT ENFORCEMENT (BSEE)	BSEE is responsible for enforcing safety and environmental regulations of offshore oil and natural gas resources.	Visit BSEE online
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)	The EPA is responsible for emissions regulations.	Visit EPA online
PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION (PHMSA)	PHMSA assesses the safety and performance of pipelines.	Visit PHMSA Online
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION (SEC)	SEC ensures financial and organizational compliance of interstate public utility holdings, as well as publicly traded companies in the oil and natural gas industry.	Visit SEC Online
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)	DOE manages the U.S.' nuclear infrastructure and administers the country's energy policy. It is the parent agency of the Energy Information Agency and the Office of Fossil Energy.	Visit DOE online

- **FACT:** At the state level in Texas, RRC and the TCEQ provide regulatory certainty for Texans and operators.
- **FACT:** While the regulation of oil and natural gas activities in Texas falls primarily under the jurisdiction of the RRC, TCEQ plays an important role in the areas of air quality, surface water management, water quality, and waste management. TCEQ has jurisdiction over air emissions resulting from flaring and venting operations at oil and natural gas production and processing sites, enforcing compliance with the state's environmental laws and monitoring air quality within Texas to protect human health and the environment.
- **FACT:** The RRC is the state agency with primary regulatory jurisdiction over the oil and natural gas industry, pipeline transporters, natural gas and hazardous liquid pipeline industry, natural gas utilities, the LP-gas industry, and coal and uranium surface mining operations. The RRC exists under provisions of the Texas Constitution and exercises its statutory responsibilities under state and federal laws for regulation and enforcement of the state's energy industries. The RRC also has [regulatory and enforcement responsibilities](#) under federal law, including the Surface Coal Mining Control and Reclamation Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Pipeline Safety Acts, Resource Conservation Recovery Act, and Clean Water Act.