

# New Reporting Measures Increase Transparency and Tracking of Flaring in Texas



## More Great News for the Environment:

Recent data shows that flaring in Texas continues to drop. Recently, the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) reported that the percentage of natural gas flared in Texas dropped to a new record low of 0.19% in November 2021.

The Texas Methane & Flaring Coalition is committed to furthering the progress that Texas continues to make in flaring reductions.

## Why is Flaring Necessary and How is it Regulated in Texas?

### Why Flare?

Flaring is the practice of burning excess natural gas at production facilities, primarily used for safety reasons. Flaring typically occurs when there is an interruption of natural gas gathering or processing capacity, during facility or gathering system maintenance, or during unplanned events for safety measures, such as alleviating pressure. Rather than venting methane into the air, flaring burns the natural gas, which releases fewer greenhouse gases than venting. A typical flare efficiency is 98% combustion.

### How is Flaring Regulated?

Flaring is regulated during the production, transporting, and processing of oil and natural gas in Texas by the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). RRC has jurisdiction of the waste of natural resources including venting and flaring and TCEQ has jurisdiction over emissions as it pertains to air quality. TCEQ has jurisdiction in Texas over air quality issues, including permitting, compliance, and enforcement.

Flaring is allowed in Texas under the RRC Statewide Rule 32 (SWR 32) in certain situations. [SWR 32](#) delineates flaring options for operators to utilize when flaring is necessary, including exempt releases, releases authorized by rule, and releases authorized by exception (permit). The following is a breakdown of the options that operators use when reporting information to the RRC.



### Exempt Releases (Form PR Code EX)

These are generally very low-volume and include releases that are not readily measured by devices routinely used in oil and natural gas operations, including tank vapors, releases during drilling, and several other specific occurrences. These releases are commonly required to prevent safety or environmental consequences.



Exempt releases are reported per the rule on the monthly production report ([Form PR](#)) to ensure an operator complies with allowable production on the respective lease.

### Releases Authorized by Rule (Form PR Code AR)

Certain releases of natural gas resulting from normal oil and gas production operations are necessary in the efficient drilling and operation of oil and natural gas wells. These releases are authorized by rule so long as they do not exceed prescribed limits, such as duration (e.g., for 10 days after initial well completion; for 24 hours following a natural gas plant shutdown) or volume (e.g., low-pressure separator natural gas not to exceed 50 mcf/day for an oil lease). Because these are authorized by rule, there will be no corresponding permit issued by the RRC.

### Releases Authorized by Exceptions (Permit) (Form PR Code AE or EP)

The RRC may administratively approve an exception not allowed under the rule authorized limitations to allow releases of natural gas if the operator of a well or production facility presents data and technical information to demonstrate the necessity for the release. Administrative exceptions shall not exceed a period of 180 days. Requests for exceptions for more than 180 days shall be granted only by final order of the commission.

### Reporting Monthly Vent/Flare Volumes

Unless the release is exempt, released natural gas must be measured and included on production reports. The RRC has required the monthly reporting of vented or flared natural gas since 1983. These volumes historically have been reported under disposition code 4 on the monthly PR. Venting and flaring volumes are reported separately on the monthly PR utilizing disposition code 10 for flaring and 11 for venting, a process that began in September of 2021. Beginning in January of 2022, operators are now also required to report the authority under which flare volumes are reported, as defined above. You can learn more from the RRC [here](#). The additional reporting datapoints will improve transparency and facilitate the RRC's ability to perform compliance audits with reported production and gather more granular data related to venting and flaring in Texas.

### New Online Research Query

In February 2022, the RRC launched a new [Online Research Query](#) that allows the energy industry and public to search Applications for Exception to Statewide Rule 32 (Form R-32) filed electronically with the agency from May 2, 2021, to present day. The query represents thousands of records that can be searched, viewed, and printed.

