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July 29

EPA issues new oil, gas drilling regulations



By Robert Francis rfrancis@bizpress.net
Editor

The Environmental Protection Agency proposed new regulations July 28 to reduce air pollution from oil and gas drilling operations.

The regulations would require so-called "green completions" of natural gas wells to reduce emissions and increase the use of equipment – such as low-bleed pneumatic valves and vapor recovery units – to reduce leaks. Implementation of the regulations will help curb emissions of volatile organic compounds and reduce leaks of other compounds.

According to the EPA, the standards would "leverage operators' ability to capture and sell natural gas that currently escapes into the air, resulting in more efficient operations while reducing harmful emissions that can impact air quality in surrounding areas and nearby states."

The regulations would apply to new wells that are hydraulically fractured for oil and gas production, as well as older wells being re-fractured. The regulations also cover facilities such as natural gas processing plants, gas compressor stations and storage tanks at well sites – areas identified by a recent report to the Fort Worth City Council as sources of escaping emissions.

"Reducing these emissions will help cut toxic pollution that can increase cancer risks and smog that can cause asthma attacks and premature death – all while giving these operators additional product to bring to market," said Gina McCarthy, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation in a statement.

The regulations would take effect Feb. 28, 2012, after a comment period that would include public hearings in Dallas, Denver and Pittsburgh. Specific dates and locations of the hearings will be announced later, according to the EPA.

"This is great news for Texas breathers and producers," said State Rep. Lon Burnam, D-Fort Worth. "I applaud the EPA for these common-sense proposals that will improve air quality and reduce smog pollution in the Barnett Shale."

Many energy producers have said in the past that they use many of these new standards already on many new gas well. A trade organization that represents many of the gas producers in the U.S., America's Natural Gas Alliance, said it would continue to study the EPA proposal.

"Natural gas producers are committed to safe and responsible development including the preservation of air quality in communities where we operate," said Dan Whitten, vice president of strategic communications for the Washington, D.C.-based organization. "We strongly believe that environmental protection and development of natural gas are not mutually exclusive. We will be studying EPA's proposed rules in the days and weeks ahead, and we will consider submitting comments as part of the notice and comment process."


More information: <http://epa.gov/airquality/oilandgas/>

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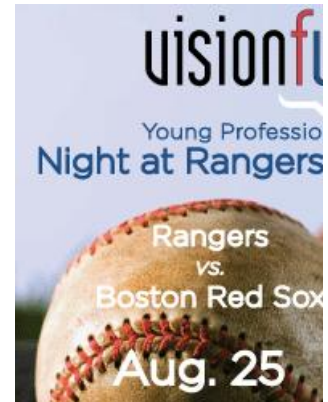
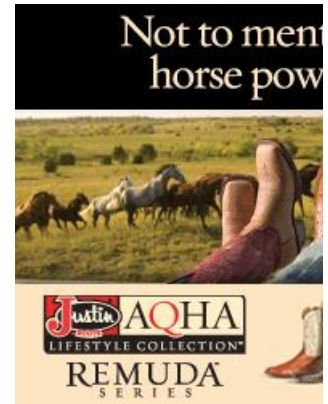
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