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### Study claims Barnett Shale emissions staggering

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By DAVID SCHECHTER / WFAA-TV

#### EMISSIONS STUDY



March 11th, 2009

### David Schechter reports

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A new study finds pollution from Barnett Shale is equal to all of the vehicle emissions in North Texas.

The oil and gas industry disputes the numbers, but it could be a blow to the region's efforts to clean up the air.

Southern Methodist University professor Al Armendariz is passionate about the air we all breathe.

So, Armendariz said he was stunned when the oil and gas industry revealed emissions from Barnett Shale were five to 10 times higher than previously thought, he said.

Armendariz said the information was submitted at the last minute as the state was finalizing its clean air plan. The new numbers were included in that plan.

"There was a big elephant that was in another room that none of us knew about," he said.

Armendariz said he wanted to know how dangerous that elephant was, and he found out through research.

According to his findings, Barnett Shale emissions had the potential to cause more smog than all the cars on the road in North Texas or all the region's airports.

He also found amounts of greenhouse gases equivalent to "two very large coal-fired power plants."

Barnett Shale natural gas producers say Armendariz's findings are flawed.

Ed Ireland, with the Barnett Shale trade group, said the research incorrectly assumed the wells emit more pollution than they actually do and that prevailing winds actually blow pollution away from the D-FW area.

"There doesn't appear to be a relationship between ozone levels and natural gas wells," he said. "If there was, you would expect to see ozone levels going up, and they've been going down."

Some gas companies working in the Shale, including Devon Energy, have been honored for reducing emissions. Devon Energy frequently uses blue filters to keep massive amounts of gas from escaping before a well is fully functional. Last year, that amounted to 6.4 billion cubic feet.

"That's enough gas to heat 90,000 homes, I believe, for a year," said Jay Ewing, with Devon Energy.

It costs a little extra, but Devon Energy more than makes up for the cost by selling what it captures.

"We're in the business to sell natural gas," Ewing said.

The industry and environmentalists both say the state needs to do its own studies.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality said it's doing just that. Findings will be incorporated into future clean air models for North Texas.

But Armendariz said it's a stunning error to not include oil and gas emissions in the state's plan to clean up the air we breathe.

"We have a plan that is flawed, and we have a whole lot of wishful thinking going on," he said.

E-mail [dschechter@wfaa.com](mailto:dschechter@wfaa.com)

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