

EPA Launches New Voluntary Methane Challenge Program To Reduce Emissions from the Oil and Gas Sector

Article By:

EPA

WASHINGTON—On March 30th, as part of the Obama Administration’s ongoing commitment to take action on climate change and protect public health, EPA is launching a new voluntary partnership program—with 41 founding partner companies in the oil and gas sector. The Natural Gas STAR Methane Challenge Program builds upon the Natural Gas STAR Program, a flexible, voluntary partnership between EPA and the U.S. oil and natural gas industry that focuses on achieving cost-effective methane emission reductions from natural gas operations. Methane is upwards of 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide in warming the planet.

“To protect public health and combat climate change, today, we are expanding our voluntary partnerships to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector through our new Methane Challenge program, which is a platform for companies to transparently report actions to reduce methane emissions and to be publicly recognized as leaders in reducing methane emissions in the United States,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. “The voluntary Methane Challenge program is one important part of our overarching strategy to reduce methane emissions, and complements regulatory efforts that will help the United States meet the Obama Administration’s goal of reducing methane emissions by 40 to 45 percent by 2025.”

The new program was announced Wednesday at the Global Methane Forum, hosted by the [Global Methane Initiative](#) and the [Climate and Clean Air Coalition](#), which has brought together hundreds of policymakers and industry experts from more than 50 countries to discuss strategies to reduce global methane emissions.

The Methane Challenge Program will provide partner companies with a platform to make company-wide commitments to cut emissions from sources within their operations by implementing a suite of best management practices within five years. Transparency is a fundamental part of the program, and partner achievements will be tracked by submitting annual data directly to EPA. Partner companies have committed to replacing or rehabilitating cast iron and unprotected steel distribution mains, and to reducing methane emissions from pipeline blowdowns, among other activities.

The Methane Challenge Program has the potential to achieve significant emissions reductions in a cost-effective way, and is an important component of the Administration’s 2014 Methane Strategy, which set out regulatory and voluntary approaches for reducing methane emissions by 40 to 45

percent below 2012 levels by 2025. EPA expects program participation to grow over time and is actively working to expand the options for participation by finalizing an additional Emissions Intensity Commitment option through the ONE Future Coalition. ONE Future is a coalition of natural gas companies focused on increasing efficiency across the natural gas supply chain.

Another key outcome of the Global Methane Forum is the re-chartering of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) for the next five years. In addition, the Forum has provided an opportunity for the GMI, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and the United Nation's Economic Commission for Europe to collaborate in strategically aligning their methane mitigation activities.

The GMI is a partnership of 43 countries, including the United States, aimed at achieving cost-effective methane reductions across five sectors: municipal solid waste, wastewater, agriculture, coal, and the oil and gas sector. Together, GMI's 43 partner countries account for approximately 70 percent of global methane emissions from targeted sources. Since 2004, partner countries avoided nearly 350 MMTCO₂e in methane emissions from these sources.

Learn more about the Methane Challenge Program and list of founding partner companies: <https://www3.epa.gov/gasstar/methanechallenge/>

Learn about the Global Methane Initiative: <https://www.globalmethane.org/>

Learn about the Global Methane Forum: <https://www.globalmethane.org/forum/index.html>

Learn about the Climate and Clean Air Coalition: <http://www.ccacoalition.org/>

[This article first appeared as an EPA News Release. See original post here.](#)

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National Law Review, Volume VI, Number 94

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