

Drilling Away our Clean Air: New Report Finds Air Pollution from Oil and Gas Drilling on the Rise

Report Prepared for the Western Governor's Association

- Released October 4, 2007, details an inventory of present and future nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide emissions from oil and gas drilling in the west.¹
 - **Nitrogen Oxides:** A group of corrosive gases, they are a byproduct of burning fossil fuels; they react with sunlight to form ground-level ozone (otherwise known as smog), create hazy skies in wilderness and parks, and pose serious health risks.
 - **Sulfur Dioxide:** Forms acid rain, hazy skies, and aggravates heart and lung diseases. At high levels, it is poisonous.²
- The report builds on a 2005 report from the Western Governor's Association, which found that air pollution from oil and gas drilling had risen substantially.

Key Findings for the Rockies—Good, But Mostly Bad

- **Bad News:** Looking at air pollution from drill rigs and compressor engines, the report found substantial increases in the Rockies (including the Dakotas) between 2002 and 2005:
 - Nitrogen oxide pollution increased by 44%.
 - Sulfur dioxide pollution increased by 147%.
- The report found that by 2018, nitrogen oxide pollution from all oil and gas drilling will increase by over 15% in the Rockies, with major increases in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming and a slight decrease in Colorado and New Mexico.
- Oil and gas drilling in the Rocky Mountain region is expected to release 251,948 tons of nitrogen oxides annually by 2018, as much as over 13 million cars.³
- **Good News:** Sulfur dioxide pollution in the Rocky Mountain region will decrease over 25% by 2018, the result of using low-sulfur diesel. Colorado however, will see a 377% increase.
- **No News is Bad News:** The report did not look at volatile organic compounds, a group of toxic, smog-forming hydrocarbon gases released from oil and gas drilling, but noted that recent inventories have underestimated volatile organic compound emissions by 98%.
- **Charting Toward Clean Air:** The report also outlines 25 cost-effective controls that can reduce air pollution from oil and gas drilling by as much as 95%.

¹ Online, http://www.wrapair.org/forums/ssjf/documents/eiccts/OilGas/2007-10_Phase_II_O&G_Final_Report_v10-07.pdf. The states included in the inventory include Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

² See, www.epa.gov/air/urbanair/nox/hlth.html and www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/chem_profiles/sulfurdi/health_sul.html.

³ According to the EPA, a standard car driven 12,500 miles annually releases 38.2 pounds of nitrogen oxides.

State by State Breakdown of Report Findings

- **Colorado**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	185%	48,737	48,342	-0.8%
SO2	197%	209	997	377%

- **Montana**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	86%	3,996	16,413	310%
SO2	197%	236	22	-91%

- **New Mexico**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	8.3%	112,540	110,034	-2.2%
SO2	48%	13,925	13,002	-6.6%

- **North Dakota**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	31%	9,269	24,797	167%
SO2	92%	3,302	2,672	-19%

- **South Dakota**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas Sources (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	62%	684	868	27%
SO2	617%	16	15	-6.25%

- **Utah**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	230%	6,384	8,227	29%
SO2	776%	17	1	-94%

- **Wyoming**

Pollutant	2002-2005 Increase from Drill Rigs/Compressors	2002 Pollution from all Oil and Gas (tons/year)	2018 Pollution from all Oil and Gas (tons/year)	Percent Change, 2002-2018
NOx	181%	28,148	43,217	53%
SO2	260%	12,338	6,423	-48%