

# Air Quality Monitoring & Standards

Every Texan deserves to breathe clean air. Yet, communities across Texas are suffering from pollution, generation after generation. It has to stop. There are no sacrifice zones without sacrificed people. The Sierra Club prioritizes bills that will address the adverse impact pollution has on communities, especially those on the frontline.

## **Our legislators must do more to monitor air quality and hold corporate polluters accountable.**

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## Protecting Texas Communities

Many Texas counties are home to **oil refineries, cement plants, concrete batch plants, ports, petrochemical plants, and older large diesel trucks** that emit potentially harmful air pollutants - putting the health of Texans at risk. See our [informal comments](#).

- Scientific studies have linked exposure to high concentrations of some types of PM with a variety of problems, including heart problems, respiratory distress, and premature death (TCEQ).
- PM from the air can deposit on water and soil harming ecosystems, soil, and crops. PM can also contribute to haze, which reduces visibility (TCEQ).

**Texas is required by federal law** on methane pollution to develop a state plan to reduce methane emissions from oil and gas infrastructure.

- Texas is the leading emitter of methane pollution, and a recent estimate from EDF found that up to 6 million tons per year of methane are being released to our air.
- 2.3 million Texans live within a half mile of active oil and gas operations. Toxic air pollution emissions can directly affect the health of individuals living adjacent to sources.
- Over 900 Texas schools are located within a half mile of oil and gas operations, despite children being at a higher risk for health complications from polluted air.

## Proposed Solutions

**Improve Protections and Processes Overseen by TCEQ and the Railroad Commission**

- Expand and improve air quality monitoring along the Gulf Coast and in the Permian Basin, including for Hydrogen Sulfide, ethylene oxide, Methane, Ozone and speciated monitors for PM 2.5.
- Require TCEQ to develop health-based standards on hydrogen sulfide pollution.

- Implement improved regulations and siting of cement plants, concrete batch plant and aggregate operations.
- Require consideration of cumulative impacts, improved community monitoring, and environmental justice in state permitting decisions.
- Plug orphan wells by taking advantage of federal funding, increasing financial assurance requirements for oil and gas wells and limiting plugging extensions on inactive wells.
- Control emissions of methane and eliminate the practice of routine flaring and venting. Create a system of methane continuous sensors to identify methane leaks in the oil and gas patch;
- Increase maximum administrative penalties on oil and gas facilities from \$10,000 to at least \$25,000 and up to \$40,000, the same level as at TCEQ.
- Create a process for a State Action Plan to implement federal methane standards.

## Related Bills

### 89th Texas Legislative Session

- **HB 1341** - Reynolds, Ron: Relating to establishment of maximum allowable ground level concentrations of hydrogen sulfide by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.
- **HB 457** - Morales, Christina: Relating to an alert system for notification of the release of toxic chemicals by a manufacturing facility.
- **HB 853** - Reynolds, Ron / SB 429 by Miles, Borris: Relating to the issuance of air quality permits for certain facilities located in a nonattainment area.
- **HB 1498** - Walle, Armando: Relating to the monitoring of emissions from certain concrete plants

## Funding Needs

### Supporting Much-Needed Improvements

- TCEQ has asked for an exceptional item of \$26 million in their budget request to expand staff and monitoring to keep up with new regulations and the growth in the state but more is needed;
- Railroad Commission has asked for \$100 million in their exceptional item request just to keep up with plugging wells
- Funding for a network of methane continuous sensors is needed to help the state monitor pollution and help industry comply with the federal Methane rule enacted in 2023.