News

Driling: Companies Work Toward Pollution Prevention

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of the problems, which could ultimately cost billions of dollars to

The worries about what drilling does to the air are both global about the effects on climate change as well as the possible health consequences from breathing smog, soot and other pollutants.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has made it possible to tap into deep reserves of oil and gas but has also raised concerns about pollution. The industry and many federal and state officials say the practice is safe when done properly, but environmental groups and some scientists say there hasn't been enough research.

Some environmentalists say if leaks and pollution can be minimized, the boom has benefits, since gas burns much cleaner than coal, emitting half the carbon

Al Gore told The Associated Press that it's "not irresponsible" to look at gas as a short-term substitute for coal-fired electricity. But Gore added that the main component of gas, methane, is a more potent heat-trapping greenhouse gas than CO2. That means that if large quantities leak, the advantage over coal disappears, the former vice president said.

In Colorado, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimated that 4 percent of methane was leaking from wells, far more than previously estimated, and that people who live near production areas may be exposed to worrisome levels of benzene and other toxic compounds present in oil and gas.

Across the industry, the technology for stopping leaks can be as simple as fixing seals and gaskets, or it can involve hundreds of millions of dollars of new con-

"I think it's totally fixable," Schnell said. "At least the bigger companies, they are really on top of this.

Gore added that when companies capture leaking methane. they end up with more to sell. "So there's an economic incentive to capture it and stop the leaking,' he said.

Another major source of worry is the industry's practice of burning off, or flaring, natural gas a byproduct of oil drilling. Over increased the amount of flared and wasted gas more than any other nation, though Russia still burns off far more than any other country.

In some places, energy companies haven't invested in the infrastructure needed to capture and process the gas because the oil is more valuable.

In the Bakken Shale oil fields of North Dakota, for example, about 30 percent of the natural gas is flared off because there aren't enough pipelines yet to carry it away. The amount of gas wasted in the state is estimated at up to \$100 million a year. And officials in North Dakota said last month that the situation there might not be completely solved until the end of the decade.

NOAA scientists also say

D.C. Man **Fatally Shot** in Altercation

DENVER CITY -- A Wednesday evening disturbance call left one man dead and residents of Denver City questioning the details last Wednesday evening.

According to the Denver City Press, Denver City resident Kenneth Krauter, was shot during an altercation on Chisolm Trail in the hours of 9:30 - 10:45 p.m. Wednesday

evening Preliminary investigative reports from the Yoakum County Sheriff's Dept. indicate Krauter was at a friends house when an altercation broke out with homeowner, Joshua Bullock, whom allegedly

shot Krauter. Yoakum County Sheriff's office commented in a Friday morning press release that "further determination will be made when this investigation is complete.'

YCSO officials stated "no arrests have been made at this time and details concerning Krauter's death are pending," according to an official statement from the YCSO.

natural gas production has contributed to unusual wintertime smog in the West, particularly in regions surrounded by mountains, and especially in snowy areas.

Ozone, the main component and local, with scientists concerned in smog, typically forms when sunlight "cooks" a low-lying stew of chemicals such as benzene and engine exhaust. Normally, the process doesn't happen in cold weather.

But NOAA researchers found that when there's heavy snowfall, the sun passes through the stew, then bounces off the snow and heats it again on the way back up. In some cases, smog in remote areas has spiked to levels higher than those in New York or Los Angeles

In open regions that are more exposed to wind, the ozone vanishes, sometimes within hours or a day. But in Utah basins it can linger for weeks, Schnell said.

Evidence that gas drilling air pollution can be managed — but that more work may still need to be done — comes from north Texas, where the shale gas boom began around Fort Worth about 10 years ago.

Mike Honevcutt, director of toxicology for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, said that in the early years of the boom, people complained about excessive pollution. Regulators started using special hand-held cameras to pinpoint pollution sources and found some sites with

high levels of benzene and other science. volatile organic compounds.

"It was a maintenance issue. They were in such a hurry, and they were drilling so fast, they were not being as vigilant as they should have been," Honeycutt said. "So we passed new rules that made them take more notice.'

Honevcutt said the cameras, which cost about \$100,000 each, have revolutionized the way inspectors monitor sites. Texas has also installed nine 24-hour air monitoring stations in the drilling region around Fort Worth, and more are on the way. Now, he said, even as drilling has increased, summer ozone levels have de-

In 1997 there were only a few hundred shale gas wells in the Fort Worth area and the summertime ozone level hit 104 parts per billion, far above the national standard then of 85. By 2012 the number of wells had risen to about 16,000, but preliminary results show the ozone level was 87 last summer.

There's still room for improvement, Honeycutt said, but the trend is clear, since the monitoring is no longer showing worrisome levels of benzene, either.

The Environmental Protection Agency isn't completely convinced. This year the federal agency cited Wise County in north Texas, a heavy gas drilling area, for violating ozone standards. Industry groups and the state have argued that the finding was based on faulty

Rosalie Jones

Memorial services for Rosalie Jones, age 91 of Seminole were held at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, December 10, 2012 at First Presbyterian Church with Pastor Ed Wegele officiating. All services were under the direction of Boyer Funeral Home.

Mrs. Jones passed away Friday, December 7, 2012 at Memorial Health Care Center in Seminole. She was born February 13, 1921 in Texline to Kate Estelle (Meador) and William Dell Webb. She married Harold Roy Jones April 9, 1941 in Lamesa. Mrs. Jones had lived in Seminole all her life.

Rosalie was a housewife and a very compassionate, loving person who enjoyed helping people. She particinated with the Rainbow Girls and was a member of the Eastern Star. In her spare time she enjoyed china painting and square

Rosalie Jones is preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Harin 1994; two brothers, and five sisters.

She is survived by one son, Michael Jones and wife Margaret of Anna; two daughters, Linda Whisenant and husband Lowell of Crockthat comes out of the ground as ett, Royce McGuire and husband Tommy of Hemphill; one sister, Joann Cargill and husband Jackie of Brownfield; eight grandchildren; eight greatthe past five years, the U.S. has grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Ratliff Funeral Homes Denver City

Seminole 432-758-2431 806-592-2321

Martina H. Riojas

Funeral Mass for Martina H. Riojas, 91, of Seminole will be conducted Wednesday (today), December 12, 2012 at 2 p.m. in the St. James Catholic Church, with Father Paul Karieakatt officiating. Interment will follow in the Gaines County Memorial Cemetery with services under the direction of Ratliff Funeral Home of Seminole. Mrs. Riojas passed away

Sunday, December 9 in Seminole.



Mrs. Riojas was born August 9, 1921 in Nueva Laredo, Mexico to Cleofas and Tomasa Herrera. Martina and Sebastian Riojas were married January 11, 1940 in Waco. She was a member of the St. James Catholic Church, the Guadalupenas Society, active in the American Legion Auxiliary and the VFW Auxiliary. She was preceded in death by her husband, three brothers and

Seagraves

two great-grandchildren. Mrs. Riojas is survived by three sons, Sebastian Riojas and wife Anneliese of Seminole. Joe Rioias and wife Sherry of North Carolina. Richard Riojas and wife LaWanda of Seminole; five daughters, Augustina Juarez and husband Jesse of San Angelo, Lois Riojas of Seminole, Janie Espinoza and husband Roland of Seminole, Nancy Brown and husband Robert of Plano and Frances Perry of Austin. She is also survived by two sisters, Isabelle Perez and husband Paul of Waco and Maria Perelez and husband Sortero of Idalou; 16 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

Pallbearers will be Sebastian Riojas, Jimmy Riojas, Ruben Riojas, Thomas Juarez, Brandon Perry and Jesse Juarez.

Irene Larue Schuler

Funeral services for Irene Larue Schuler, age 90 of Seminole were held at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 11, 2012 at First Presbyterian Church with Pastor Ed Wegele officiating. Burial followed at Gaines County Memorial Cemetery. All services under the direction of Boyer Funeral Home.



Mrs. Schuler passed away Monday, December 10, 2012 at Memorial Health Care Center in Seminole. She was born March 23, 1922 in Alan Reed to Ruby (Hart) and Ernest Hines. She married Ted Schuler on June 1, 1974 in Seminole, and was a member of the First Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Schuler had lived in Seminole since 1955, and

was self-employed for thirty-eight years as owner and manager of Gaines County Bookkeeping. She enjoyed china painting, music and flowers, and sang in the Presbyterian Church Choir for many

Irene Schuler is preceded in death by her parents; her husband Ted in 1976; one brother Wayne Hines and one sister Edna Mathews.

She is surivved by four nieces, Diana Fayo and husband Johnny of Odessa, Joann Staley and husband Harry of Las Cruces, New Mexico, Lynn Gilliland and husband Fred of Midland, Lea Weismer and husband Larry of Grand Prairie; one nephew, Don Mathews of Pennsylvania; one sister-in-law, Jo Hines of Seminole; special friends, Dean and Lenora Whitfield of Seminole; all the staff of Memorial Health Care Center in Seminole and several great-nephews and nieces.

So far, NOAA scientists say they haven't found signs that gas or oil drilling is contributing to a global rise in methane.

the drilling is being done, which is interesting," said James Butler, head of global monitoring for

The EPA has passed new rules on oil and gas emissions that are scheduled to go into effect in 2015, and in 2012 it reached companies to spend more than

\$14 million on pollution controls in Utah and Wyoming. Colorado, Texas and other states have passed more stringent rules, too.

Carlton Carroll, a spokesman 'Not the mid-latitudes where for the American Petroleum Institute, a lobbying group for the oil and gas industry, pointed out that many companies started developing the equipment to limit methane and other pollution before the EPA rule.

"API is not opposed to controls on oil and gas operations legal settlements that will require so long as the controls are costeffective, allow sufficient lead time

and can be implemented safely,' Carroll said in an email, adding that the industry has requested some technical clarifications to the rule and is working with EPA

Prasad Kasibhatla, a professor of environmental chemistry at Duke University, said that controlling gas drilling pollution is "technically solvable" but requires close attention by regulators.

"One has to demonstrate that it is solved, and monitored,

New Rules:

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that the new rules would probably be adopted by the Railroad Commission toward the beginning of the state legislative session, which starts in January.

We're supportive of them moving forward right now, as long as they're feasible and they can implement them," Hastings said.

Careful construction of oil and gas wells is vital to preventing oil, gas or fracking-related fluids from leaking into aquifers. A study last year for the Groundwater Protection Council found that from 1993 to 2008, faulty drilling or well completion was responsible for 10 documented instances of groundwater contamination

The proposed rules span a range of topics related to what the industry calls "well integrity." They cover the quality of the protective cement placed between layers of pipe in an oil or gas well and a pressure test for the pipes themselves (which are often called casing) in wells being prepared for fracking. They could create new requirements for the components of blowout preventer systems on certain wells, including those onshore in populated areas.

Among the most-discussed provisions is a proposal that bans fracking operations at non-cemented wells when the shale being fracked comes within 1,000 vertical feet of a usable aquifer.

Public comments ended last month, and some drillers said that the proposed rules were too restrictive. Keith Valentine, a lawyer with Clayton Williams Energy,

wrote in a filing that the changes would have a "negative impact" with significant costs.

Environmentalists, while welcoming the proposals, wish they would do more. In a public filing, the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and other green groups urged the commission to improve oversight of cement work and ban "toxic additives during the well drilling process.

Barry Smitherman, the Railroad Commission chairman, declined to comment on the proposal ahead of the new version expected this week. The commission is also in the early stages of looking at rule changes that would impact wells built to dispose of waste fluids from fracking operations.

State Rep. Jim Keffer, R-Eastland, the chairman of the House Energy Resources Committee, is "closely monitoring" the Railroad Commission's work, according to Evan Autry, his legislative aide. Keffer championed legislation last year requiring disclosure of some chemicals in hydraulic fracturing. For now, Keffer is not planning to introduce a bill on well integrity, leaving it to the Railroad Commission, Autry said in an email.

Anderson of the Environmental Defense Fund said that the Railroad Commission has long been seen as a leader on drilling rules, but that it has not kept up on well integrity.

Several of the other states have stolen a march on Texas," he said, noting that Colorado, Wyoming, Pennsylvania and Ohio have updated well-integrity rules in recent years



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