

Letters to the editor: On methane in New Mexico

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Excess methane is often burned off from oil and gas production and distribution systems. *(Photo: Courtesy photo)*

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Reduce excess methane

Understanding how interconnected our environment is with human health is vital to ensuring our communities are healthy and vibrant. New Mexico held methane stakeholder meetings around the state. I was fortunate to attend the one in Carlsbad. The local stories spoke to me, not as a health-conscious environmentalist, but as a mother and a proud New Mexican.

I am thrilled New Mexico is taking its first steps to protect residents from excess methane and volatile organic compounds. With the federal government rolling back safeguards, it is more important than ever that we are protected. Many people may feel like what happens in the rest of the state doesn't affect us here in Las Cruces, but that isn't true.

Excess methane is part of a crisis our neighbors in the east experience daily. Residents mentioned headaches, dizzy spells, sores, and nosebleeds simply for living in the land of enchantment. Children and the elderly's wellbeing is at risk every time they go to school, shopping, or out in the community.

We cannot turn a blind eye and must support efforts that improve the lives of New Mexicans. Without statewide support, our communities will continue to be exploited by corporations and government. This happens all over New Mexico from the northwest in the Four Corners region to the southeastern New Mexican plains. Firms can still be profitable and be cost-effective. Excess methane venting and flaring negatively impact us locally with undeniable long-term impacts. Methane is the No. 1 emitted greenhouse gas in our state, and it is one of the four main drivers of climate change, which damages our air quality and drinking water, and threatens agriculture.

Antoinette Reyes, southern New Mexico organizer for Sierra Club, Mesilla Park