



**PA. Dep failing to track old leaking wells
January 22, 2016**

Recent news reports that the Pennsylvania [Department of Environmental Protection is unsure how much methane is in the air](#), even as the state proposes new regulations, comes as no surprise to anyone who has followed the DEP's handling of the fracking boom. The auditor general, upon issuing his [scathing report on the DEP's handling](#) of shale gas development, called the agency "woefully unprepared."

It's well-known that methane leaks at every point in the production, transmission, and distribution of natural gas, but an important source of methane leakage is often overlooked. Pennsylvania is peppered with hundreds of thousands of old wells categorized as either orphaned or abandoned. Princeton researcher Mary Kang who published a recent study on these type of wells called them "super-emitters" of methane.

The DEP's failure to get a handle on the management of all old wells means that methane is leaking, unmeasured and unchecked, at all times. To make matters worse, new drilling near old wells can cause the two wells to communicate, leading to eruptions like the week-long methane geyser caused by Shell when it disturbed a well that had not been drilled since 1932.

In his Facebook town hall to tout his new methane rules, Gov. Tom Wolf repeated a favorite refrain that he believes fracking can be done safely. As always, he failed to cite a source that would lead him to believe that and ignored the established science that says he's wrong.

One thing's for sure. He can't point to his DEP for reliable data.