

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette®

**Sense on methane: the gas industry has a stake in the new Pa. rules**

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The state Department of Environmental Protection's reasonable new regulations to reduce methane emissions in natural gas production should be embraced by the industry. For one thing, it's good business.

As Marcellus Shale Coalition president David Spigelmyer said himself, "Shale-related methane emissions continue to steeply drop as production sharply climbs," thanks to best practices by drillers in recent years. That instinct to reduce methane output ought to be reinforced by government. The state even noted that the rules, building on standards put forward by the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency, can help save a buck or two: "Methane that doesn't leak into the atmosphere can be sold."

Struggling through a national downturn, the energy industry probably does not relish such cheery advice from the state. It also argues that this is no time to sock drillers with another layer of government oversight, creating "a chilling effect on the American energy renaissance," as the American Petroleum Institute likes to say.

While the growth of domestic energy has indeed been a remarkable development, it won't do the nation any good if matched by environmental decay. The Marcellus Shale, one of the most compelling gas sources on the continent, will likely be back at capacity before too long. It's time to get these regulations underway before the next boomlet.

In announcing the new rules Tuesday, Gov. Tom Wolf said that Pennsylvania, the nation's second-largest producer of natural gas after Texas, is "uniquely positioned to be a national leader in addressing climate change while supporting and ensuring responsible energy development."

While methane is a powerful contributor to climate change, the gas industry is right to underscore that its output accounts for less than a quarter of methane emissions in the United States. As the EPA reports, the leading offender is actually "enteric fermentation," an agricultural term for what cows and other livestock emit.

Now if regulators could devise stringent rules to get those releases under control, Pennsylvania's air would be not only cleaner but sweeter.