



COLORADO
Oil & Gas Conservation
Commission
Department of Natural Resources

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**Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission announces
response to CDPHE's oil and gas health effects study**

DENVER - Today, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) released the oil and gas health effects study, "Human Health Risk Assessment for Oil & Gas Operations in Colorado." The [study](#) uses emissions data from oil and gas operations in Colorado to model what people could be exposed to as a result of oil and gas development.

The study shows short-term exposures to chemicals like benzene during worst-case weather and emission conditions may cause negative short-term health effects. Based on the limitations of the modeling study, additional assessment is needed to evaluate real world circumstances.

The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) today announced its response to CDPHE's oil and gas health effects study.

"Working with our partners and CDPHE, we will immediately enact stricter and safer precautionary review measures to protect public health, safety, welfare, the environment and wildlife, which align with our mandate under SB 19-181," said COGCC Director Jeff Robbins. "Our response is threefold and includes a new plan for permit review, a new plan for testing, and then a plan to use the information from the testing for future regulation and rulemakings."

COGCC's three next steps:

- 1. Immediate Action on Permits Under 2,000 Feet:** The study implicates potential short term health impacts in worst-case scenarios for locations under 2,000 feet from well to building unit. Therefore, the COGCC will inform operators that permit applications will be reviewed under the Director's Objective Criteria and under the mandate of SB 19-181 for permits under 2,000 feet. Under Objective Criteria, the Director will continue to review proposed locations 1,500' or less to wells. Given the health study, the Director will ensure a protective review will occur for all wells under 2,000 feet

from well to building unit (i.e. home). This review process will continue until the COGCC completes new rulemakings or July 2020.

Current COGCC pending permits <2,000 ft include:

<1,500 ft reviewed using Director's Objective Criteria:

- Form 2A: 162; Form 2: 2214
- Of the 162 2A locations, 45 are on Operator Priority Lists

1,500-2,000 ft reviewed under the mandate of SB 19-181:

- Form 2A: 39; Form 2: 440
- Of the 39 2A locations, 12 are on Operator Priority Lists

Note: COGCC issues permits for both Forms 2A and 2: Form 2A is for the oil and gas location assessment or site permit and Form 2 is for the well permit.

2. Determine Causation & Evidence-Based Decisions: CDPHE's study has limitations, including reliance on some data from 2014, before significant regulatory changes at CDPHE and COGCC, and data which does not incorporate current operational best management practices. Also, the study fails to address evidence-based emissions testing and thus does not address causation, or frequency and timing, as well as currently used associated mitigations.

Therefore, for the first time in Colorado, the Administration has directed the COGCC and CDPHE to develop and implement testing to obtain better site-specific data that includes actual monitoring, rather than modeling, to further understand causation, sources, timing, and types of emissions, such as benzene. The data collected will be used to evaluate the potential for impacts and to ensure protections during the drilling and completions phases of oil and gas development.

In order to ensure public health protection for people living in proximity to oil and gas locations, the COGCC is proposing to collect data from several actual oil and gas locations to compare to CDPHE's study. The actual data, supplemented with site-specific models, will evaluate potential direct impacts to people living, working, or recreating in proximity to oil and gas activities. If the actual data collected demonstrates that impacts in exceedance of acute health risk values are occurring or likely to occur, the COGCC may take additional regulatory actions to curtail the activities causing those impacts.

3. SB 19-181 Rulemakings: The data learned from the new testing will inform COGCC's new regulations and rulemakings, and to ensure protective protocols are part of SB 19-181 rulemaking outcomes.

COGCC is currently in rulemakings for Mission Change and Cumulative Impacts, as well as others, and has seven more rulemakings to finalize as part of SB 19-181

implementation. This data learned from the new testing protocols will help to identify protective protocols to inform COGCC's new and future regulations and rulemakings.

“SB 19-181 did not tell the COGCC to stop, have a moratorium or ban oil and gas development and nor did it give industry a free pass on permits,” said Robbins. “The COGCC is committed to implementing SB-181, regulating in a protective manner, and will work to ensure that the best data, from CDPHE’s study to the future data-driven studies, can be used to inform these critical decisions that impact all of Colorado.”

SB 19-181 ensures that oil and gas development and operations in Colorado are regulated in a manner that protects public health, safety, welfare, the environment and wildlife resources. The COGCC is in the midst of reviewing its rules and procedures to evaluate what changes are required to reflect the new law’s requirements. To learn more about the COGCC, visit www.colorado.gov/cogcc.

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Additional Materials:

1. [Permit Fact Sheet](#)
2. [CDPHE News](#): Visit here for CDPHE Press Release on HRA Study