

March 28, 2014

Summary of Climate Action Plan Methane Reduction Strategy

On March 28, 2014, the White House released its strategy to reduce methane emissions under the Administration's Climate Action Plan. The strategy focuses on reducing methane emissions from four sectors: landfills; coal mines; agriculture; and oil and gas. The strategy aims to improve measurement of methane from these sectors while using incentive-based programs and the Administration's existing powers to reduce both domestic and international methane emissions. These efforts are designed to provide benefits to the economy and public health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance safety.

Reducing U.S. Methane Emissions

The strategy notes that technologies to capture methane that would otherwise vent to the atmosphere are already widely used across multiple sectors. These technologies provide economic benefits by recovering a valuable fuel and climate benefits by reducing emissions of a potent GHG. The strategy outlines key action already being taken to reduce methane emissions and planned Administration and government agency actions that will enhance emission reduction efforts across four important sectors.

Landfills

In 2012, municipal solid waste landfills generated approximately 18 percent of total anthropogenic methane emissions in the U.S., equal to about 100 million metric tons of CO₂e. In the summer of 2014, EPA will release a proposed update to the standards for new municipal solid waste landfills, which will include assessing opportunities to minimize emissions when landfills are built or modified. To decrease methane emissions at existing landfills, EPA will issue an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) by June 2014 to engage industry and stakeholders on methane reduction best practices. EPA will continue to support landfill gas-to-energy projects through the Landfill Methane Outreach Program and work to reduce, recover or recycle food waste through the U.S. Food Waste Challenge.

Coal Mining

The coal mining industry generated 56 million metric tons of CO₂e in 2012, representing 10 percent of total U.S. methane emissions. As part of its efforts to reduce coal mine methane, the BLM will release an ANPRM in April 2014 requesting public input on the development of a program for the capture, sale or disposal of coal mine methane from mines on Federal land. EPA will also continue to work with the industry through the Coalbed Methane Outreach Program.

Agriculture

In 2012, the agriculture industry generated 36 percent, or 200 million metric tons CO₂e, of total U.S. methane emissions. In June 2014, the dairy industry, USDA, EPA and DOE will jointly release a Biogas Roadmap detailing steps to accelerate the adoption of biogas systems, with the goal of reducing GHG emissions across the sector's value chain by 25 percent by 2020. The Administration's strategy for this sector does not include any regulation and is based entirely on voluntary actions. USDA will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to support the

adoption of biogas systems, while the AgSTAR program will continue working to expand the use of biogas systems and serve as source of information for key stakeholders. Funding will also be made available to reduce methane reductions unrelated to manure management, such as emissions from rice cultivation.

Oil and Gas

The Administration will build on existing cost-effective technologies and best management practices to reduce methane emissions across all stages of the oil and natural gas value chain. Methane emissions from this sector totaled 159 million metric tons CO₂e in 2012, representing 28 percent of total U.S. methane emissions.

During the spring of 2014, EPA will release a series of technical white papers on emissions and control technologies with a focus on oil and co-producing wells, liquids unloading, leaks, pneumatic devices and compressors. EPA will use these papers to solidify its understanding of methane sources and to determine if additional regulation is needed to control emissions from these sources. EPA will decide whether to develop new regulatory standards by this fall. If EPA decides to regulate emission sources, a rulemaking schedule will be set to be completed by the end of 2016. In addition, in the spring of 2014, EPA will begin to engage the industry, states, and other key stakeholders on ways to enhance Natural Gas STAR and launch the new partnership by the end of 2014.

Building off of the DOE roundtable discussion on March 19, 2014, additional roundtable discussions will take place with stakeholders with the primary objective of accelerating the adoption of best practices for reducing methane emissions from processing, transmission and storage and distribution segments. The first installment of the Quadrennial Energy Review, to be released in January 2015, will include recommendations for industry, Federal and state governments on improving energy transmission, storage and distribution systems. Finally, in addition to existing DOE loan guarantee authority, the 2015 budget proposes a new \$4.7 million DOE program to speed development of technologies for leak detection and monitoring, pipeline leak repair without having to evacuate gas from the pipelines, smart pipeline sensors, and compressor controls.

To reduce venting and flaring of methane produced from Federal and Indian oil and gas leases, the Bureau of Land Management will develop a draft proposed rule (Onshore Order 9) later this year.

Improving Methane Emissions Measurement

The strategy also includes plans to improve the accuracy of methane emissions measurements. The two overarching components of this plan are improving bottom-up emissions data and advancing the science for monitoring and validating atmospheric methane readings. Improvements will include:

- funding more accurate methane measurement technologies;
- enhancing the U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory, including incorporation of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program data;
- building a national methane monitoring network;
- improving local and regional emissions modeling; and
- improving global emissions monitoring and estimates

Reducing Global Methane Emissions

To help reduce global methane emissions, the U.S. will continue working with initiatives established under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC). These initiatives include programs to reduce methane emissions related to municipal solid waste and agriculture. The U.S. is currently working with international and corporate partners to establish a CCAC Oil and Gas Methane Partnership. With an expected launch in 2014, participating oil and gas companies will use proven, cost-effective technologies to reduce methane emissions from the largest emission sources. The U.S. will also continue helping global partners through the Global Methane Initiative, a public-private effort with 43 partner countries that leverages U.S. technical expertise to reduce methane from agriculture, coal mines, municipal solid waste, oil and gas systems, and municipal wastewater.