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## Department of Energy round table discusses methane emissions

On May 20, Department of Energy (DOE) officials convened a White House round table to discuss methane emitted by the natural gas sector. White House Counselor John Podesta and Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz met with scientists and representatives from environmental groups and nongovernmental organizations to discuss efforts to decrease methane emissions. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that may account for a third of climate warming since the 1750s, as well as being detrimental to health.

The natural gas and petroleum industry is the second-largest producer of methane in the U.S., and recent scientific studies indicate that the industry's emissions may be higher than previous EPA estimates. In light of this, round table participants recommend reducing emissions by developing technology to better detect methane leaks, and encouraging the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG), which emits less methane than many other fuel sources. The groups also identified the need for better regulation of the natural gas sector by DOE and other agencies in order to limit emissions.

Under President Obama's Climate Action Plan, the DOE has arranged five round tables in order to improve methane policy. The plan also requires revisions to the Bureau of Land Management's standards concerning the controversial practice of venting and flaring, the process of releasing and igniting excess natural gas, and has prompted debate concerning its overall role in regulating oil and gas wells on public lands.

Sources: Department of Energy, E&E News, White House Office of the Press Secretary

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