

BLM postpones compliance deadlines for methane emissions

June 15, 2017

On June 15, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) posted a notice in the Federal Register indefinitely postponing certain compliance dates within the Methane Waste Prevention Rule. Originally published on November 18, 2016, the Methane Waste Prevention Rule aims to reduce the loss of natural gas that occurs during oil and gas production operations on Federal and Indian lands.

The Rule lays out new requirements that operators capture a certain percentage of the gas they produce, and implement leak detection and repair (LDAR) programs. BLM is postponing next year's compliance dates based on pending litigation and written requests from several industry groups and states to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in which they indicate that energy companies will face substantial operating costs in order to comply with the Rule by the January 17, 2018, deadline.

This postponement comes on the heels of a failed attempt to repeal the Rule under the Congressional Review Act in May. It also closely follows the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed two-year hold on their proposed rule to ensure oil and gas wells are in compliance with the Clean Air Act.

Provisions of the Rule that went into effect on January 17, 2017, have not been rescinded, including a requirement that operators submit a waste minimization plan with their drilling applications.

At the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources budget hearing for the Department of the Interior (DOI) on June 20, Secretary Zinke stated his intent to rewrite the BLM rule entirely.

Sources: E&E News, Federal Register, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management
