

Flaring and Air Quality

What is Flaring?

Flaring is the safe, controlled burning of natural gas that cannot be processed. It is a necessity for certain aspects of natural gas and oil production, and it is primarily conducted to ensure the safe operation of facilities.

Flaring is conducted to safely dispose of gas that cannot be conserved due to economic or technological limitations, or to test wells in exploratory areas prior to the installation of gas gathering and processing infrastructure. The flaring of natural gas emits considerably less greenhouse gases compared to venting.

What Activities Affect Air Quality?

Emissions arise from flaring, venting and equipment exhaust. Other sources include emissions from transportation, processing, transmission and distribution of gas.

The Flaring, Incinerating and Venting Reduction Guideline for B.C. is used by all operators to (1) reduce or eliminate flaring and venting, (2) understand flaring volume thresholds and time limits, (3) provide public notification, (4) provide requirements for flare stacks and incinerators and (5) outline documentation requirements.

Flaring



Venting



Exhaust



96%

solution gas conserved in 2014

Public Health and Air Quality

The Commission reports annually on flaring emissions from the natural gas and oil industry, and according to the 2014 report there has been a 26 per cent decrease in flaring levels since 1996.

According to the Ministry of Environment's most recent Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report, in 2012 upstream oil and gas production accounted for 16 per cent of the province's total greenhouse gas emissions.

The goal to eliminate all routine flaring, as defined by the BC Energy Plan, has been achieved.

The Commission liaises with the Ministry of Environment on air quality initiatives, including air quality studies and sharing data from the mobile air monitoring unit.

The Commission is not directly responsible for the regulation of greenhouse gases, but does work with involved agencies, such as the Ministry of Environment. One new initiative is the Greenhouse Gas Industrial Reporting and Control Act – a key feature of which is a GHG emissions intensity benchmark for LNG facilities of 0.16 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) tonnes per tonne of LNG produced.

The Commission is expanding its air monitoring tools with the Roaming Air Monitor (RAM), a new van capable of recording air quality levels while being driven or parked.

Flaring accounted for **5%** of GHG emissions from the upstream oil and gas sector

source: 2014 Air Summary Report



For Further Information

Email ogc.communications@bcogc.ca or call 250-794-5200

24 Hour Incident Reporting for Industry 1-800-663-3456

This information is published by the BC Oil and Gas Commission and available online at www.bcogc.ca

What is New at the Commission?

- ✓ **Area-based Analysis** was incorporated into the permitting review process. Projects should minimize disturbance where possible and project planning must take into consideration all efforts to minimize cumulative impacts on the landscape, reduce the footprint of activities and shorten restoration/reclamation time frames on specific resource values.
- ✓ The Commission is participating in **studies with post-secondary institutions**, such as the UBC and UNBC, to address key aspects of natural gas development including cementing and fracture propagation, assessments of groundwater sampling, impact on water quality and community readiness.
- ✓ The Commission has two mobile ambient **air quality monitoring units** (CAMEL and RAM) to measure air pollutants and meteorological parameters at specific locations.
- ✓ The Commission and Government Natural Resource Sector Agencies established the Natural Resource Sector Aboriginal Liaison Program as a means to support greater Aboriginal community awareness of oil and gas planning, development, safety, environmental and emergency management, restoration activities, and compliance management. The Liaison Program provides a knowledgeable, trained and properly equipped resource for Aboriginal communities that can assist the Commission in monitoring and inspection tasks as appropriate. The program began in May 2014 and expanded in Dec. 2016.

How Do We Proactively Regulate?

The Commission has the legislative authority to make decisions on proposed oil and gas activities. While the Commission does not set policy, the diverse expertise and experience of Commission staff provides critical insight at every level of oil and gas development. This knowledge base provides perspective through scientific evidence, guidance, best practices, reports, tools and analysis.

Companies looking to explore, develop, produce, and market oil and gas resources in B.C. must apply to the Commission. The Commission reviews, assesses and makes decisions on these applications. This consolidated single-window authority provides not only a one-stop place for all oil and gas and associated activity requirements, but a consistent application, decision, regulatory and compliance authority. Stakeholders work with one agency; therefore, the Commission serves the public interest by having an all-encompassing review process for oil and gas activities.

Incident Reporting

The Commission manages a 24/7 emergency service. The service includes 24-hour standby of a designated Emergency Officer who answers all calls and determines how the Commission responds to the complaint or emergency.

Complaints are important in helping reduce the risk of potential incidents, and the Commission commits to responding within two hours. In most cases, inspectors are dispatched to the location to determine the cause of the complaint and assist to resolve the situation.

Emergency Response

The Commission plays an integral role in emergency management for natural gas and oil related activities, including:

- Receiving reported incidents and complaints.
- Confirming emergency response needed and assessing potential risks.
- Oversight of permit holders' response actions including the notification of appropriate land owners, stakeholders and/or other agencies.
- Liaising with and coordinating interagency emergency operations.
- Providing regular situation updates.
- Authorizing official stand down of emergency response.



Public Concerns and Complaints

1-250-794-5200 (24-hour public number)

Report concerns such as odours, spills or noise.



Incident Reporting for Industry

1-800-663-3456 (24-hour emergency number)

Report oil and gas related incidents.