



Shining a Light on Flaring

In its 100-plus year history of regulating the energy industry, the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) has undertaken numerous steps to protect residents and the environment as the industry continues to grow and evolve in the state.

Tackling issues head-on has meant listening to the public, analyzing data and trends and working with stakeholders to roll out initiatives that enhance the agency's critical safety mission. One recent example has been the RRC's concerted efforts to address flaring of natural gas in Texas.



How Does the RRC Regulate Flaring?

In 2020, the agency began taking proactive steps to reduce flaring in the state. The state rule that regulates flaring is **Statewide Rule 32 (SWR 32)** which specifies certain situations, known as exempt or authorized flaring (see sidebar), in which an operator can flare without applying for an exception to SWR 32 in order to flare.

Examples of Exempt or Authorized Flaring in SWR 32

- Safety reasons
- Gas released during well repairs
- Fugitive emissions of gas
- Gas released at a wellsite during drilling operations
- Gas released during the first ten days of production after initial well completion



Form R-32

Operators can apply for exceptions to the rule by submitting a Form R-32, which was revised and enhanced in 2020 to provide specific guidance on when an exception to flare is permissible, under which circumstances and for how long.

Changes to Form R-32 included:

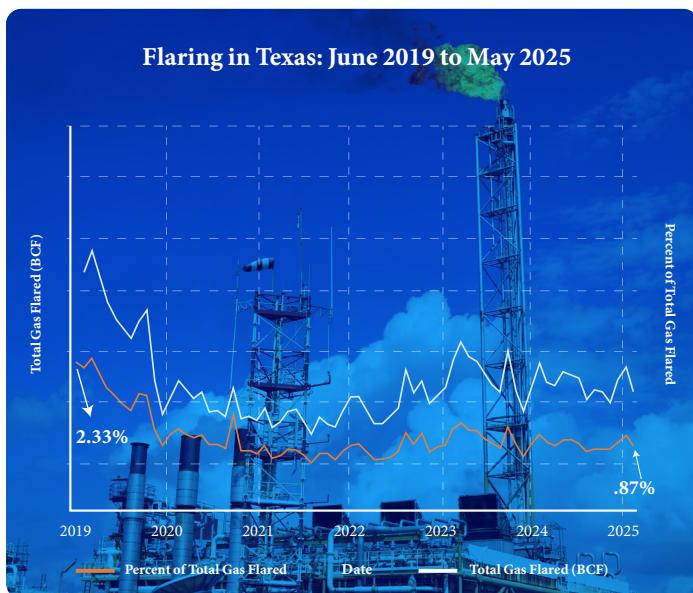
- Requiring operators to submit more specific information to justify the need to flare or vent gas in accordance with RRC rules.
- Requiring operators to provide additional key data points to facilitate compliance audits with reported production.
- Providing incentives for operators to use technologies to reduce the amount of gas flared.

An exception to **Rule 32** can be approved administratively by RRC staff for a period not to exceed 180 days of flaring exception. Applications are thoroughly reviewed by RRC staff before being approved or denied.

Effective Regulation Produces Results

The crucial steps taken by the RRC have resulted in dramatic decreases in flaring, even as natural gas production has hit record levels in recent years. The RRC began comparing the flaring rate - the percentage of gas flared compared to the amount of gas produced - from the year prior to the critical changes taking place.

As shown in the chart below, from June 2019 to May 2025 (the most recent month of data as of this publication) the flaring rate in Texas has steadily decreased by more than 63%. The monthly rates have consistently been below one percent, meaning more than 99% of natural gas produced in Texas was being beneficially used.



Collaboration is Key

In addition to the administrative steps to reduce flaring, the oil and gas industry has also increased pipeline capacity to transport more natural gas out of facilities, thereby reducing the necessity to flare that gas. All are part of the collaborative efforts in Texas to address flaring and protect public and environmental safety.

Flaring Recommendations & Best Practices

TXOGA
Texas Oil & Gas Association • Since 1939

Texas Pipeline Association

Texas Alliance of Energy Producers

TERA

Texas Energy Research & Education Institute

Texas Energy Council

Permian Basin Petroleum Association

Permian Producers Association

STEER

South Texas Energy & Economic Institute

June 15, 2020

The Honorable Wayne Christian
The Honorable Christi Craddick
The Honorable Ryan Sitton
Railroad Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 12967
Austin, Texas 78711-2967

Re: Recommendations of the Texas Methane and Flaring Coalition

Dear Chairman Christian, Commissioner Craddick, and Commissioner Sitton,

As members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Oil Economic Recovery, we have been honored to work with the Railroad Commission of Texas to develop solutions that address concerns and challenges related to ongoing market impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and oversupply of crude oil around the globe. We appreciate the speed with which the Commission is moving to provide relief and protect jobs in Texas, all while protecting health, safety and the environment.

At the May 5th meeting of the Commission, members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force were asked to share additional recommendations related to flaring. Since 2019, an effort has been well underway through the Texas Methane and Flaring Coalition (the Coalition) to reduce both methane emissions and flaring, and most of us have been heavily involved. We are pleased to see the Coalition's preliminary recommendations to reduce flaring and improve emissions reporting. These include reducing the time an administrative approval can be provided for flaring by a substantial 50%, cutting it from 180 days to 90 days, and providing much greater clarity on data submission that will lead to reduced emissions from more effective operational and regulatory decisions after these changes are incorporated.

As we provide these meaningful and impactful recommendations for comment and consideration by the Commission and a wide variety of stakeholders, we believe this is a pathway that will lead to an end to routine flaring as industry continues to make progress.

By way of background, the Coalition was formally established in December of 2019 after months of preliminary work and is comprised of seven trade associations and over forty Texas operators. The Coalition was voluntarily formed to better assess the issues of methane emissions and flaring and to develop industry-led solutions. Texas operators recognize that reducing flared volumes, keeping flares lit, and optimizing

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Did You Know?

The Blue Ribbon Taskforce for Oil Economic Recovery unveiled a report titled 'Flaring Recommendations & Best Practices'. Recommendations in the report include reducing the time an administrative approval can be provided for flaring by 50% and providing much greater clarity on data submissions to improve the information the state has on flaring.



About the Railroad Commission:

Our mission is to serve Texas by our stewardship of natural resources and the environment, our concern for personal and community safety, and our support of enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texans. The Commission has a long and proud history of service to both Texas and to the nation, including more than 100 years regulating the oil and gas industry. The Commission also has jurisdiction over alternative fuels safety, natural gas utilities, surface mining and intrastate pipelines. Established in 1891, the Railroad Commission of Texas is the oldest regulatory agency in the state. To learn more please visit <https://www.rrtexas.gov/about-us/>.

