

Health Risks in Tennessee from Oil and Gas Air Pollution

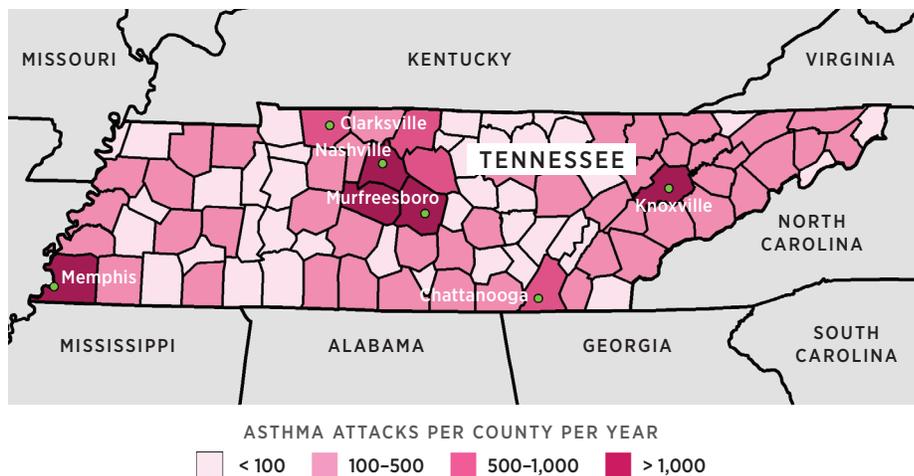
In the United States the oil and gas industry dumps millions of tons of air pollutants into our air each year. This mix of pollutants includes methane, a very potent climate pollutant, and enormous amounts of toxic air pollutants and pollutants that cause ozone smog pollution. Toxic air pollutants cause cancer and other diseases, while ozone smog can cause a variety of health problems, such as asthma attacks and worsening the effects of bronchitis and emphysema.

While these pollutants cause health problems in areas with oil and gas booms and intense activity, they also cause problems in other regions, as air pollution travels across the country. **This fact sheet examines how oil and gas air pollution hurts the health of people in Tennessee.**

Pollution from oil and gas sites across the nation generates ozone smog, which is damaging the health of Tennesseans:

- Nearly 25,000 Tennessee children per year will suffer asthma attacks due to ozone from this industry (see Figure).
- These kids live across the state—oil and gas air pollution causes over 4,700 asthma attacks per year in the Memphis area, almost 2,600 attacks per year in the Knoxville area, and almost 7,200 asthma attacks per year in the Nashville area.
- Unfortunately, no county in the state escapes from the ozone pollution produced by the oil and gas industry.

FIGURE 1
Ozone-induced Childhood Asthma Attacks Attributed to Oil and Gas Emissions in Tennessee Counties



- Adults are also harmed by ozone exposure, with 52,000 person-days of restricted activity in Tennessee linked to breathing higher levels of ozone.
- Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution exposure and over 500 schools in Tennessee are located within a half-mile of oil and gas operations.

Air pollution from the oil and gas industry also includes hazardous, toxic air pollutants, such as benzene, formaldehyde, and acetaldehyde. According to EPA's data for 2011, over 170 tons of hazardous toxic air pollution—benzene, formaldehyde, and acetaldehyde and other compounds—were emitted from almost 16,000 oil and gas sites in Tennessee.

- 357,000 people in Tennessee live within a half-mile of active oil and gas operations. Toxic air pollution emissions can directly affect the health of individuals living adjacent to sources.

The bottom line: across Tennessee and neighboring states, air pollution from the oil and gas industry affects young and old people. **Tennesseans need strong federal standards for air releases from the oil and gas industry, such as EPA's standards for new wells and equipment and the Bureau of Land Management's Waste Rules for wells on Federal lands.**