



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

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EPA Announces Flyovers in the Permian Basin in New Mexico and Texas

DALLAS, TEXAS – (August 1, 2022) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting helicopter flyovers of the Permian Basin region in New Mexico and Texas. The flyovers will use infrared cameras to survey oil and gas operations to identify large emitters of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, as well as excess emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). While VOCs have potential short- and long-term health effects on their own, they also contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone when they combine with nitrogen oxides in the presence of sunlight.

“The Permian Basin accounts for 40 percent of our nation’s oil supply and has produced large quantities of dangerous VOCs and methane over the years, contributing to climate change and poor air quality,” **said Region 6 Administrator Dr. Earthea Nance.** “The flyovers are vital to identifying which facilities are responsible for the bulk of these emissions and therefore where reductions are most urgently needed.” By using helicopter surveillance, EPA can assess a large geographic area and survey operations from thousands of oil and gas operations in the basin. When the infrared camera detects hydrocarbon emissions during a flyover, a technician onboard the helicopter will note the time, GPS location and other information about the emissions source. EPA will use this information to identify the facility that released the excess emissions and initiate enforcement follow up actions with the facility operator.

EPA will use several tools to address noncompliance identified through the flyovers, including EPA administrative enforcement actions and referrals to the Department of Justice. EPA’s actions to address these violations will include significant penalties, corrective actions to prevent future non-compliance and monitoring to verify corrective actions have addressed the emissions.

The flyovers will continue through August 15. By emphasizing identification of potential super-emitters, this effort builds on previous aerial surveillance efforts in the Permian Basin area starting in 2019.

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