



Issue Snapshot: Methane Emissions

Background: The focus on greenhouse gas emissions is not limited to carbon emissions from power plants. New attention is being given to methane emissions from the natural gas supply chain. Although methane is a short-lived pollutant, it traps much more heat in the atmosphere than carbon.

In April 2014, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a series of white papers analyzing methane leaks from industry. EPA has received input from business and environmental groups on the papers and is currently engaging stakeholders on next steps. EPA appears committed to create a program that will encourage good behavior, but wants it to be practical to achieve.

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy has said the agency will determine in early 2015 whether to propose mandatory rules to curb methane emissions from oil and gas producers. The EPA is not expected at this time to release a rule on the downstream/distribution component of the natural gas supply chain.

Company Position: Con Edison is participating in several initiatives to proactively address concerns with methane emissions.

Con Edison is a leader in a new group known as The Downstream Initiative, which is collaborating to address key technical and regulatory factors impacting methane emission reduction opportunities from natural gas distribution systems. Through the Initiative, distribution companies have agreed to work to constructively engage the federal government and other stakeholders to identify and encourage programs that accelerate investments in infrastructure and promote outstanding operations to reduce methane emissions within natural gas distribution systems. The first concrete step has been to work with the EPA to evaluate an alternative to its proposed Gas STAR Gold Program. The Gas STAR Gold Program is intended to be a voluntary certification program for reducing methane emissions.

Con Edison will continue to engage with interested parties to articulate the greenhouse gas benefits associated with safety-focused initiatives. At the same time, the company will work with The Downstream Initiative to develop better information on greenhouse gas emissions to improve our understanding of methane sources and strategies to reduce emissions.