

CERTIFIED GASLIGHTING:

HOW GAS CERTIFICATION HAS GAINED A POLICY Foothold, EVEN AS IT FAILS TO PROVE IT CAN ACCURATELY DETECT EMISSIONS.

Fossil fuel companies are under substantial pressure to show they are taking action to reduce methane emissions from their operations. Increasingly, they are turning to certifiers that use continuous emissions monitors at well sites to ostensibly confirm operations below a certain threshold of methane pollution during gas production. But no matter the label – “natural” gas, “responsibly sourced,” “differentiated,” “certified,” or “next-gen” – the truth remains the same: **Methane gas is a threat to people and the planet.**

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS:

Certifiers rely on unreliable technology and methods that fail to demonstrate meaningful emissions reductions, yet these concerns have not stopped certification’s growing influence on public policy decisions.

Methane and the myth of gas certification

Despite industry’s claims that it is reducing emissions, independent estimates show that the global oil and gas sector released over 79.5 million metric tons of methane in 2023, accelerating the climate crisis at an alarming rate. Studies and reports cast serious doubt on the technology behind these certification schemes. While the certification industry has grown rapidly – within a few years, almost 40% of gas produced in the U.S. may be certified – U.S. methane emissions have continued to steadily rise each year.

Continued failures, growing impact

Building on last year’s Certified Disaster report, Earthworks thermographers captured evidence of 23 emissions events over 10 months in 2023, but just one of those events was recorded by on-site monitors used by operators. This shows that operators haven’t improved certification monitors despite clear evidence of their major flaws.

Records also showed monitors sold and deployed by Project Canary – one of the leading purveyors of

certification services – were offline more than a quarter of the time on average, and crucial data captured during that time lost.

In spite of this extremely poor performance record, industry has accelerated the adoption of certification and has increasingly pressed regulators to use certification as a proxy for regulatory oversight. A growing number of utility companies are purchasing certified gas, passing premiums



onto ratepayers, and claiming to make progress against climate targets. Operators are pushing for certification to be used in voluntary international measurement, monitoring, reporting, and verification (MMRV) frameworks meant to ease the way for more gas exports, qualifying for tax credits for hydrogen projects, and as part of a new process for determining whether liquified natural gas (LNG) export terminals are in the public interest, to name a few.

THE FAILURES

- Monitors still miss nearly all pollution events detected by our researchers.
- Project Canary’s “continuous” monitors are frequently offline.
- Companies rarely take action to address detected pollution.
- Industry and regulators see opportunity in certification schemes.



Rules that put public health and safety first

- Methane reduction must only happen under government oversight and regulation that puts community and consumer protection first.
- Certification should not be a part of regulatory frameworks.
- Effective deployment of continuous emissions monitors requires full transparency, public availability of monitoring data, and real-world deployment that matches peer-reviewed test conditions.

Certification is not a substitute for phasing out fossil fuels. State and federal government regulators should treat certification programs with extreme skepticism and avoid using certification in place of real, robust oversight that prioritizes the health, safety, and wellbeing of communities. Regulatory agencies should seek to protect consumers from certifiers’ misleading claims by implementing strict, peer-reviewed standards for the deployment of monitors and fully transparent and publicly available monitoring data.

1. [\[link\]](#)
2. [\[link\]](#)
3. [\[link\]](#)
4. International Energy Agency data show U.S. methane emissions rose 0.5Mt – 4% – to 13.3 Mt in 2023.
5. Complete findings are available at [CertifiedGaslighting.com](#).
6. In which none of the 22 emissions events documented by Earthworks thermographers at Colorado sites in 2022 were detected by on-site emissions monitors, [\[link\]](#).
7. [\[link\]](#)
8. [\[link\]](#)
9. [\[link\]](#)
10. [\[link\]](#)
11. Complete recommendations are available at [CertifiedGaslighting.com](#).