

Ratepayer Concern about Methane Leaks

Dear Dr Kayla Hahn,

My name is Jeff Smith, a resident and ratepayer in [REDACTED]. I'm a 34-year-old father, husband, and engineer. I've lived in Missouri since 2009 and have fallen in love with the state for its natural beauty. I care very deeply about our state and want to see it continue to improve.

Thank you for your service and leadership on our Public Utility Commission. I am writing to express my concern about methane leaks. Nationwide, our natural gas distribution system is actually leaking [5x more methane than EPA's official estimates](#), and here in Missouri, we have our fair share of methane leaks causing explosions, health concerns, and displaced residents.

These leaks are costing consumers money, are harmful to human health and have disproportionate impacts on low-income communities. Low-income communities are more likely to live near aging leaking natural gas infrastructure or power plants. This proximity places those communities at more risk for respiratory illness and other health risks from air pollution and other toxins like benzene. These leaks also pose more wide-spread problems by contributing to increased energy costs, and the escaped methane contributes directly to ongoing climate change.

As a constituent and ratepayer, this is particularly important to me because every winter our heating costs can be as high as \$[REDACTED] a month for our home. This enormous monthly cost for natural gas affects our ability to put food on the table and pay our mortgage. I have little idea of how customers with lower paying jobs are affording their energy bills in the winter.

I urge you to require utilities to locate and eliminate all methane leaks in our system, prioritizing advanced leak detection and repair – and even strategic retirement – over expensive and often unnecessary pipeline replacements. Whether this takes the form of financial incentives, performance standards, or cost-benefit analysis requirements, your urgent action is needed to protect public safety and keep rates affordable.

Can you please share what's being done on this front and how I can help as a concerned ratepayer? You can email me at [REDACTED] or call me at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Jeff Smith, P.E.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]