According to publicly available data from the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division, there were 1,310 reported spills in New Mexico in 2016, an 11 percent decrease from the previous year. The vast majority of spills, 83 percent, took place in Lea and Eddy Counties.

In 2016, oil and gas companies reported more than 1,300 spills in New Mexico

By Jesse Prentice-Dunn

The Center for Western Priorities

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How many spills were there last year?

In 2016, 1,310 oil and gas related spills were reported in New Mexico. That’s roughly 3.6 spills per day.

That means on average each day:

- 9,052 gallons of produced water spilled
- 1,609 gallons of crude oil spilled
- 2,317 thousand cubic feet of natural gas leaked
COG Operating LLC reported 153 spills, the most of any company, followed by Occidental Permian LTD, and OXY USA Inc. Combined, the top five companies were responsible for nearly 40 percent of all reported releases.

Who Are New Mexico’s Top Oil and Gas Spillers?

New Mexico’s top five spillers were responsible for **39.6 percent** of all oil and gas related spills in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. COG OPERATING</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. OCCIDENTAL PERMIAN</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. OXY USA</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DEVON ENERGY PRODUCTION</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. BOPCO</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amid continued low oil and natural gas prices, New Mexico saw a slight decrease in gross withdrawals of natural gas and a slight increase in oil production in 2016. The number of new drilling permits decreased, with 1,097 permits approved in 2016, compared to 1,613 the year before.

In 2016, an average of 1,609 gallons of crude oil were spilled each day in New Mexico, along with 9,052 gallons of “produced water,” salty wastewater often laden with toxic chemicals.

What’s In A Spill?

Of the spills reported in 2016, **445 contained crude oil**.

Here’s what else spilled.

- **Produced Water**: 658 spills, 78,886 barrels
- **Oil**: 445 spills, 14,021 barrels
- **Natural Gas**: 381 spills, 848 million cubic feet
- **Condensate**: 43 spills, 1,077 barrels
- **Other**: 87 spills
Leaks from natural gas, primarily comprised of methane, remained significant. Emissions from the 381 reported releases totaled 848,144 Mcf, **enough to power** roughly 4,900 homes for a year.

**WHAT ABOUT EMISSIONS?**

A reported **848 million** cubic feet of natural gas leaked in 2016. That’s equivalent to **46,408 metric tons of CO₂**.

Which is the same as:

- the annual energy of **4,900 homes**
- driving **9,803 cars for a year**
- burning **49,521,312 pounds of coal**

Below are additional summary statistics for the reported spills that occurred in New Mexico in 2016.

**WHAT CAUSES A SPILL?**

Of spills reported in 2016, **most were caused by equipment failure**.
In 2016, Lea and Eddy County outstripped other New Mexico counties with **over 500 oil and gas related spills** each — which is around 400 more than San Juan, the county with the next highest number of spills.

Here’s where we know spills occurred in 2016.

* 17 spills occurred in unknown counties.
Data on reported spills in 2016 was obtained from the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division’s online permitting database on March 14, 2017. A spill was defined as a release with an assigned incident number. Incidents with multiple materials spilled were counted as one spill. Many incidents reported more than one released material, thus the sum of spills broken down by material spilled is greater than the total number of incidents. To determine percent change from the previous year, the number of reported spills in 2016 was compared to data from the Center for Western Priorities’ 2015 New Mexico Oil and Gas Toxic Release Tracker.