FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 17, 2026

Contact: Sam Law, FracTracker Alliance, sam.law@fractracker.org

Disclosures Reveal Use of Banned and Toxic Fracking Chemicals in Colorado, but Key Parts of Landmark 2022 Law Go Unenforced

State regulators still don't require disclosure of the chemicals used in drilling, or show that residents, schools, and first responders are receiving required notifications about the use of chemicals in nearby wells

DENVER — Oil and gas companies' own disclosures show that five fracking chemicals banned by a 2021 state rule were used in 77 wells across six Colorado counties after the ban took effect, according to *Toxic Risks, Regulatory Failures*, a new report from Colorado Sierra Club, PSR Colorado, and FracTracker Alliance.

The disclosures also show that more than 88 percent of wells covered by the state's 2022 disclosure law used at least one of six toxic chemicals, including ethylene oxide and acrylamide, both linked to cancer. An estimated 50,000 Coloradans live within a mile of those well pads.

But four years after Colorado passed a first-in-the-nation law intended to end the culture of secrecy around oil and gas chemicals, the report finds that, contrary to the law's requirements, the Energy and Carbon Management Commission (ECMC) has not required companies to disclose the chemicals they use in drilling and enhanced oil recovery. Across more than 1,600 wells covered by the law, that adds up to a combined 843,369 well-days without disclosure of drilling chemicals. The law also requires operators to give the list of chemicals used in their wells to nearby residents, schools, first responders, and water providers, but the state has not provided written evidence that those notifications are happening.

Taken together, the report finds, Coloradans are likely to continue to be unknowingly exposed to toxic substances used in the state's oil and gas wells.

"For four years since HB22-1348 was signed into law, we have been frustrated with ECMC's lack of implementation," said Rep. Meg Froelich, one of the bill's sponsors. "There has been considerable dithering about what substances must be disclosed, which has prevented Coloradans from knowing all of the oil and gas chemicals that could impact our health, and we have yet to see clear evidence of community notification, which is plainly spelled out in our bill. The governor is in charge of ECMC. It's time for him to require the agency to enforce the law."

The report is the three organizations' second analysis of HB22-1348, which requires more complete public disclosure of chemicals used in oil and gas wells. The first analysis, published in May 2025, found extensive non-compliance with the law's requirement to disclose the chemicals injected into each oil and gas well. The new report found that compliance has improved but significant gaps remain. It also found widespread discrepancies between the national FracFocus chemical disclosure database and ECMC's database that suggest significant errors in disclosure regimes, warranting further investigation.

"The 2022 law was designed to ensure that Coloradans had complete knowledge of the chemicals used underground in oil and gas wells," said Dusty Horwitt, JD, Senior Research & Policy Counsel at FracTracker Alliance and the report's lead author. "But our findings show that ECMC is not fully enforcing the law and raise serious concerns about the agency's commitment to protecting the public from toxic exposures."

The stakes of clear regulatory oversight of the chemicals used, and of transparency for first responders, are nowhere more visible than in the Bishop Well blowout near Galeton in Weld County in April 2025. The well sprayed gas and fluids for almost five days, leading to the evacuation of nearby homes and the closure of the local elementary school for nearly two weeks. Air monitors picked up toxic air pollution, including benzene, as far as two miles away. The well was fracked with three of the six chemicals of concern cited in the report: acrylamide, ethylene oxide, and methanol. Accidents like this also show how important it is to notify first responders and nearby residents ahead of time about the full list of chemicals used in oil and gas wells, because they need to know what substances they are dealing with.

"Communities and their physicians need to know if they are being exposed to harmful chemicals as oil and gas production proceeds close to their neighborhoods, schools and places of work," said Jan Douglas, M.D., board member of Physicians for Social Responsibility Colorado. "Without this knowledge, it is hard to look for and understand the health conditions that may be related to this chemical exposure. Public health and safety agencies also need this knowledge in order to monitor exposure and study the population-level effects of that exposure. Colorado's ECMC must be held accountable for enforcing our laws requiring oil and gas operators to disclose all the chemicals they use at their facilities in our state."

Weld County stands out in the report's data, with about two-thirds of the well pads covered by the law. The six counties where banned fracking chemicals were used are Garfield, Gunnison, La Plata, Las Animas, Rio Blanco, and Weld.

“The disclosure that many dangerous chemicals, including many expressly prohibited in regulations, are being used in oil and gas operations in Colorado is a wake-up call for all of us,” said Ramesh Bhatt, Conservation Chair at the Colorado Sierra Club. “Despite this alarming information, the ECMC is yet to properly implement many aspects of Colorado’s chemical disclosure law. This lax enforcement puts those of us who live in Colorado and our environment in great jeopardy. Governor Polis and Governor-elect Phil Weiser must properly implement the law, ensure transparency, and protect Coloradans.”

The report makes several recommendations including that ECMC should immediately implement the provisions of the 2022 law that remain unimplemented; require the disclosure of all downhole chemicals, including those used in drilling and enhanced oil recovery; and make sure community notifications are occurring. Companies that have violated the 2022 law and the 2021 ban should be fined at levels that are commensurate with the violations to set a clear example for the oil and gas industry. State rules allow fines of $200 to $15,000 per violation per day. The state also can’t rely on disclosure alone: ECMC should work with universities to independently monitor air and water for the disclosed oil and gas chemicals and test fracking fluid and wastewater to check that disclosures are complete. ECMC should also investigate the discrepancies between the state’s two oil and gas chemical disclosure systems.

“Communities are expected to follow the state’s rules, but residents have neither the authority nor the resources to compel a multibillion-dollar industry to comply with the law,” said Randy Willard, a resident of Aurora, Colorado, and member of the grassroots organization Save The Aurora Reservoir (STAR). “That responsibility belongs to the state agencies charged with oversight and enforcement. Colorado residents should not have to fight to make the state enforce its own laws.”

To read the full report, *Toxic Risks, Regulatory Failures*, visit: https://fractracker.org/2026/11/colorado-oil-gas-chemical-disclosure-2026/

To see which chemicals were reported at well pads near you, use the report’s interactive map: fractracker.org/colorado-chemicals-map

Dusty Horwitt (FracTracker Alliance), Ramesh Bhatt (Colorado Sierra Club), and Lauren Swain (PSR Colorado) are available for interviews.

About FracTracker Alliance

FracTracker Alliance maps, analyzes, and communicates the risks of oil, gas, and petrochemical development to advance just energy alternatives that protect public health, natural resources, and the climate. fractracker.org

About Colorado Sierra Club

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is the oldest and largest nationwide non-profit environmental membership organization in the U.S. Its purpose is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.

About PSR Colorado

PSR Colorado is the Colorado state chapter of the Nobel Prize-winning national organization, Physicians for Social Responsibility. Guided by the values and expertise of health professionals, PSR Colorado members and allies offer evidence-based education and advocacy, elevating the voices of health professionals to protect current and future generations from the health impacts of fossil fuels, the climate crisis, and exposure to radionuclides and other toxic substances. PSR Colorado advocates for alternatives to reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear energy. psrcolorado.org

# # #