

The Permian Basin Climate Justice Coalition
Center for Biological Diversity * Citizens Caring for the Future * Conservation Voters New Mexico
Counselor Chapter Health Impact Assessment Committee * Earth Ethics, Inc. * Earthworks
Frack Free Four Corners * Frack Free New Mexico * GreenLatinos * Healthy Climate New Mexico
Laguna Acoma Coalition For A Safe Environment * New Energy Economy * New Mexico Climate Justice
New Mexico Environmental Law Center * New Mexico & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light
New Mexico Wild * Oilfield Witness * Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter * Texas Permian Future Generations
Vessel Project of Louisiana * Western Environmental Law Center * WildEarth Guardians

November 19, 2025

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department
1190 St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: Urgent Need for Independent Air Monitoring and Public Health Information Following Artesia Refinery Explosion

Dear Secretary Kenney and NMED leadership,

On behalf of the Permian Basin Climate Justice Coalition, representing more than 20 organizations working to protect the people, land, air, and water of southeastern New Mexico and West Texas, we write to express our deep concern following the October 31, 2025 explosion at the Artesia refinery. Our hearts are with the workers, families, and community members affected, especially those injured and those now living with fear and uncertainty about the safety of their air.

This tragedy underscores a systemic failure that our coalition and community partners have warned about for years: the absence of transparent, independent air-quality monitoring in the heart of the Permian Basin. Southeastern New Mexico—one of the most heavily industrialized regions in the country—has only two state-operated air monitors, neither located in Artesia. During environmental emergencies, residents are forced to rely on corporate sources for information about air safety. That is unacceptable.

The public deserves real-time, publicly accessible data from independent state and federal agencies, not from the same corporations responsible for toxic emissions. When explosions, flaring, or major releases occur, people need to know **immediately** what they are breathing, what protective steps to take, and how to access health resources.

We urge NMED to take the following actions without delay:

1. **Install a permanent, state-operated air-quality monitor in Artesia**, capable of measuring particulate matter, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), sulfur dioxide, and other refinery-related pollutants.
2. **Provide real-time public access to air-monitoring data** through an easily accessible online dashboard and local notification system (SMS, radio, or community alert).
3. **Develop and distribute clear community health guidance**—in English and Spanish—on steps residents can take during industrial emergencies, including safe shelter-in-place practices, mask use, and when to seek medical attention.
4. **Convene a public meeting in Artesia** within 30 days to brief residents on current air-quality conditions, monitoring plans, and opportunities for community participation in long-term oversight.
5. **Execute the \$500,000 settlement agreement** with WildEarth Guardians to deploy a mobile air monitoring unit in the Permian, which is invaluable in emergencies like this.

These measures are not only reasonable, they are a matter of environmental justice and public safety. Families in Loving, Artesia, and across southeast New Mexico have lived too long in the shadow of refineries, gas plants, and pipelines without adequate protection or transparency. The Artesia refinery has operated for more than a century, making this not a new problem but a long-ignored one. An independent air monitor in this community is beyond long overdue. No parent should have to wonder whether it's safe for their children to trick-or-treat outside, breathe the evening air, or go to school the next morning.

If industry pollutes it, the state must monitor it. Communities in Artesia shouldn't be left breathing uncertainty. NMED must guarantee residents real information, real protections, and real accountability.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We stand ready to collaborate with your department to advance community-based monitoring, health education, and long-term solutions that keep New Mexicans safe.

Sincerely,

The Permian Basin Climate Justice Coalition, in addition to the following organizations:

Colin Cox, Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity

Haley Jones, Organizer
Citizens Caring for the Future

Justin Garoutte, Climate and Energy Advocate
Conservation Voters New Mexico

Teresa Seamster, Air Quality Researcher
Counselor Chapter Health Impact Assessment Committee

Mary Gutierrez, Director
Earth Ethics, Inc.

Andrew Forkes-Gudmundson, Senior Manager for State Policy
Earthworks

Jenni Siri, Coordinator
Frack Free Four Corners

Rebecca Sobel, Coordinator
Frack Free New Mexico

Carlos Matutes, New Mexico State Director
GreenLatinos

Shelley Mann-Lev, Executive Director
Healthy Climate New Mexico

Manuel Pino
Laguna Acoma Coalition For A Safe Environment

Mariel Nanasi, Executive Director
New Energy Economy

Anni Hanna, Director
New Mexico Climate Justice

Dr. Virginia Necochea, Executive Director
New Mexico Environmental Law Center

Joan Brown, Community Advocate
New Mexico & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light

Sally Paez, Staff Attorney
New Mexico Wild

Charlie Barrett, Thermographer
Oilfield Witness

Antoinette Reyes, Organizer
Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter

Eli Hilbert, Organizing Director
Texas Permian Future Generations

Roishetta Ozane, Founder
Vessel Project of Louisiana

Rose Rushing, Attorney
Western Environmental Law Center

Melissa Troutman, Climate & Health Advocate
WildEarth Guardians