



TOP POLLUTER REPORT: **ExxonMobil / XTO Energy**

***Recognizing ExxonMobil for its unmatched record of oil, gas,
and toxic waste spills in New Mexico***

“ExxonMobil’s legacy in New Mexico is more than 5 million gallons of toxic waste — enough to fill over 800 tanker trucks in a convoy of pollution — in addition to nearly 90,000 hot air balloons worth of leaked gas, more than 10 times Balloon Fiesta’s launch. A lifetime of spills and emissions, putting profits over people.”

- *Melissa Troutman, WildEarth Guardians Climate and Health Advocate / Lead Author*

Executive Summary

WildEarth Guardians analyzed publicly available data from the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division's Spill¹ and Incident² Databases (1988–2025) to compile this *Top Polluter Report*. This analysis documents ExxonMobil/XTO's toxic legacy in New Mexico and reveals the scale, causes, and consequences of the company's decades of pollution.

Data were drawn from the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division (OCD) Spill and Incident Data Portal and represent self-reported spills by operators. Guardians reviewed and calculated spill volumes, causes, materials, and geographic distribution, translating volumes into gallons³ and tanker truck⁴ equivalents for scale. Figures reflect all available data reported between 1988 and September 2025.

In 2024, ExxonMobil's drilling subsidiary, XTO Energy, topped the list of companies spilling the most toxic fluids in New Mexico. In 2025, Exxon continues to dominate, ranking as the third biggest spiller of both toxic fluids and methane. Since it began operating in the state in 1988, XTO has reported 17,883 spills.⁵

To date, Exxon/XTO has spilled more than 5,053,188 gallons (120,314 barrels / 802 tanker trucks) of toxic liquids and released 6,890,815 mcf of methane and other gases. These air emissions alone equal the annual pollution of 7 million cars⁶ or nearly 90,000 hot air balloons⁷ — more than 10 times the number that launch at Balloon Fiesta.

Of the toxic liquids spilled, over 1.8 million gallons (44,516 barrels / 297 tanker trucks) were “lost” to the environment. These spills include diesel, produced water, motor oil, crude oil, condensate, chemicals, acids, brine, and glycol.

Exxon/XTO first reported a spill in New Mexico⁸ in 1988, the same year oil and gas waste was exempted from hazardous waste laws despite clear evidence that these wastes contain carcinogens, heavy metals, and radioactive materials. Exxon/XTO has spilled just under 3.8 million gallons of liquid waste, called produced water, in New Mexico.

Spills are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Permian Basin in Eddy County, where over 91% of Exxon's spills occur. The leading causes are “equipment failure” and “normal operations,” demonstrating that chronic pollution is a routine part of Exxon/XTO's business model.

¹ [OCD Spill Database](#) sorted for spills reported between January 1 - September 20, 2025 by all operators. [See data spreadsheet here.](#)

² [OCD Incident Database](#) sorted for liquid spills in 2024. XTO top spiller with 158 spills. [See sorted data here.](#)

³ One barrel (bbl) equals 42 U.S. gallons.

⁴ One tanker truck equals approximately 150 barrels or 6,300 gallons, based on the typical U.S. Department of Transportation capacity for a large road tanker hauling liquid petroleum.

⁵ [OCD Spill Database](#) sorted for all spills reported by XTO Energy. [See sorted data here.](#)

⁶ Vehicle equivalent calculated using EPA emission factors (0.0192 kg CH₄/ft³), IPCC AR5 20-year global warming potential for methane (GWP₂₀ = 84–87), and EPA's average passenger vehicle emissions (4.6 metric tons CO₂/year)

⁷ Hot-air balloon equivalent calculated as (MCF × 1,000 ft³) ÷ 77,000 ft³, where 77,000 ft³ is the average envelope volume of a Balloon Fiesta hot-air balloon. Methane volume from EPA conversion factor (1 MCF = 1,000 ft³). Used for volume comparison only; hot-air balloons contain heated air, not methane.

⁸ OCD spill data for all XTO Energy spills ever reported. [See data spreadsheet here.](#)

New Mexico Lifetime Spill Summary

❖ **Total Spills Documented:** 17,883

❖ **Most Affected Lands:**

- 5,092 spills on state and federal public lands
- 119 spills on Tribal lands
- 12,474 spills have *undisclosed* landowners (Blank)

Landowner ⁹	# of spills
Federal	4,092
State	1,000
Private	199
Indian	110
Navajo	6
Jicarilla	1
Ute	1
(Blank)	12,474

❖ **Most Affected Counties:**

- Eddy County (Permian Basin) - 16,341 out of 17,883 spills
- Lea County (Permian Basin) - 1,127 out of 17,883 spills
- San Juan County (San Juan Basin) - 355 out of 17,883 spills

❖ **Most Affected Waters:**

- 9 spills indicate impact to waterways, all in San Juan County

⁹ OCD "lease type" category (column J in [data spreadsheet](#)) names the landowner / leaseholder. Types include a "blank" category where landowner / leaseholder is not disclosed, and a generic "indian" category despite additional categories for specific tribes.

❖ **Total Fluid Volume Spilled:**

- 5,053,188 gallons of liquid spilled (120,314 barrels / 802 tanker trucks)
- 1,869,672 gallons of liquid “lost” (44,516 barrels / 297 tanker trucks)

❖ **Total Volume “Produced Water”¹⁰ Spilled:**

- 3,799,110 gallons spilled¹¹ (90,455 barrels spilled / 603 tanker trucks)
- 1,246,938 gallons lost (29,689 barrels / 198 tanker trucks)

Material	# of Spills	Total Spilled ¹²	Total Volume “Lost”
Natural gas (methane)	15,888	6,665,019 mcf	6,664,481 mcf
Hydrogen Sulfide	1	225 mcf	0 mcf
Natural Gas Liquids	2	0 bbl	0 bbl
Acid	4	72 bbl	36 bbl
Produced water	989	3,799,110 gal	1,246,938 gal
Crude oil	542	13,330 bbl	5,105 bbl
Chemical	10	79 bbl	3 bbl
B.S. & W. ¹³	2	151 bbl	0 bbl
Brine Water	2	36 bbl	30 bbl
Diesel	1	50 bbl	2 bbl
Drilling Fluid/Mud	4	760 bbl	380 bbl
Gelled Brine (Frac Fluid)	4	26 bbl	0 bbl
Condensate	79	3030 bbl	2174 bbl
Glycol	5	23 bbl	7 bbl
Lube Oil	7	150 bbl	6 bbl
Motor Oil	5	0 bbl	0 bbl
Other ¹⁴	318	12,270 bbl / 20 gal / 225,534 mcf	7,092 bbl / 20 gal / 225,534 mcf
Unknown	16	0 bbl / 0 gal / 0 mcf	0 bbl / 0 gal / 0 mcf
(Blank)	4	0 bbl	0 bbl
TOTAL	17,883	6,890,778 mcf / 5,056,130 gallons	6,890,015 mcf / 1,246,958 gallons

¹⁰ “Produced water” is oil and gas waste known to contain carcinogenic and toxic materials, including heavy metals, radioactive materials, volatile organic compounds, in addition to a host of unknown chemicals. In 2020, researchers found that “86% of produced water chemicals lack toxicity data to complete a risk assessment in the US.” [Danforth study, see footnote 12.]

¹¹ 88 of XTO’s produced water spill entries listed ‘0’ barrels spilled. If the volume was zero, the spill would not need to be reported; only spills of 5 barrels or more require reporting. (NMAC 19.15.29) Another 338 entries list no known material spilled, categorized as “other”, “unknown”, or “blank”. Therefore, the total amount of any material spilled, including produced water, remains undisclosed.

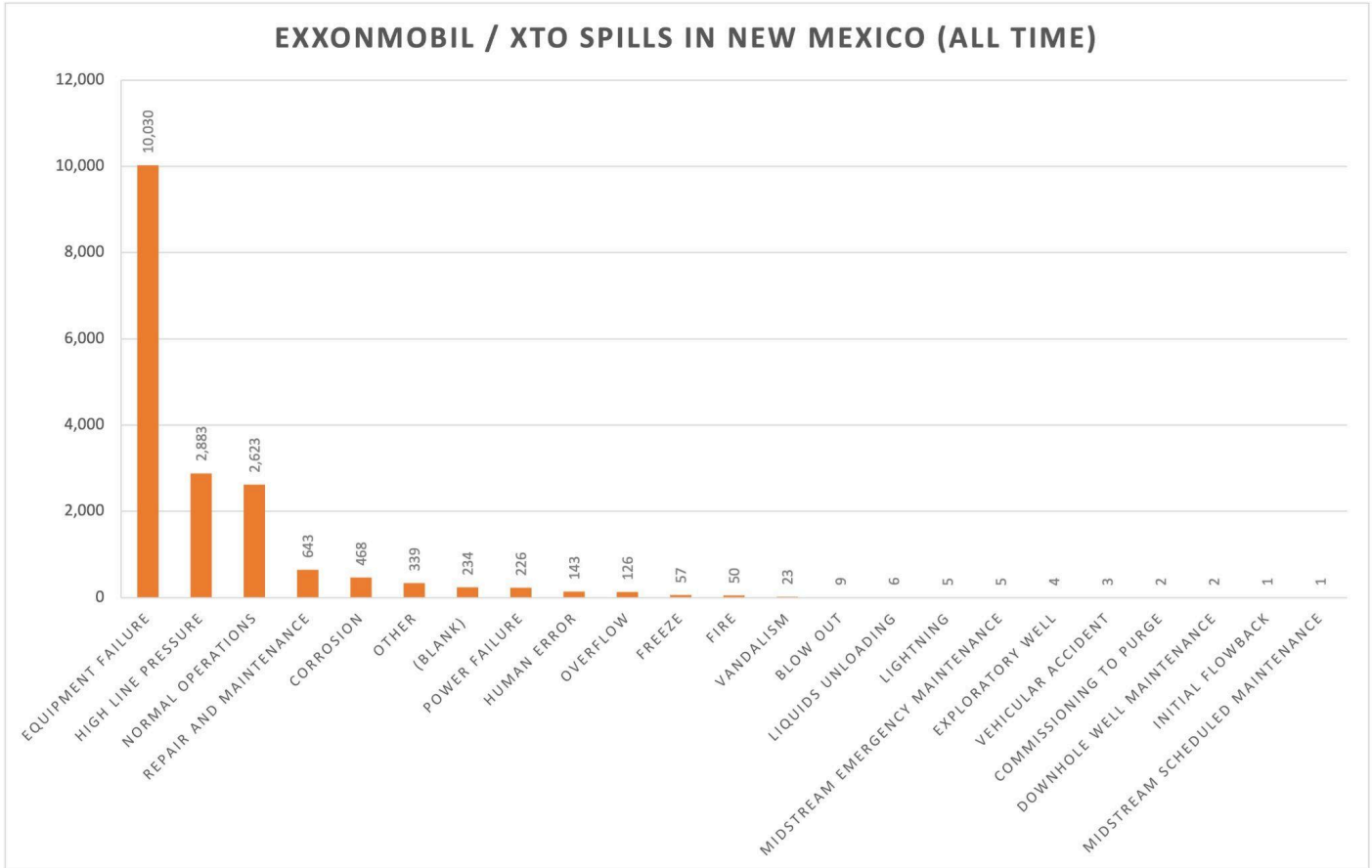
¹² Volumes are listed as reported in the OCD spill database (no conversions). Only spills of 5 barrels or more are required to be reported, yet many spill volumes for almost all categories list “0” or fewer than 5 barrels spilled. It is unclear whether operators are needlessly reporting smaller spills or volumes are being incorrectly entered.

¹³ Materials reported under this category include “biocide” and “scale inhibitor”.

¹⁴ “Other”, “Unknown” and “Blank” categories do not list specific materials in OCD’s database, and often don’t list volumes, but this information may be available inside individual spill files.

❖ **Primary Cause of Spills (out of 17,888 total):**

- #1 **56% Equipment failure** (10,030 spills)
- #2 **16% High line pressure** (2,883 spills)
- #3 **14% Normal operations** (2,623 spills)



❖ **Primary Contaminants:**

- #1 **Flared / vented air emissions (15,889 spills)** - NM Oil Conservation Division categorizes vented and flared spill materials under “natural gas” (climate-harming methane) and “hydrogen sulfide” (poison gas). However, other pollutants are emitted during flaring/venting events, including hazardous air pollutants like benzene and formaldehyde as well as carbon dioxide. A 2024 study found that “[flare/vent] emissions are found to cause over \$7.4 billion in health damages, 710 premature deaths, and 73,000 asthma exacerbations among children annually.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Tran, H., Polka, E., Buonocore, J. J., Roy, A., Trask, B., Hull, H., & Arunachalam, S. (2024). Air quality and health impacts of onshore oil and gas flaring and venting activities estimated using refined satellite-based emissions. *GeoHealth*, 8, e2023GH000938. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2023GH000938>

- #2 Produced Water (989 spills) – “Produced water” is oil and gas waste that is known to contain carcinogenic and toxic materials, including heavy metals, radioactive materials, volatile organic compounds, in addition to a host of unknown chemicals that are not required to be disclosed to regulators or the public. In 2020, researchers found that “86% of produced water chemicals lack toxicity data to complete a risk assessment in the US.”¹⁶
- #3 Crude Oil (542 spills) – Petroleum contamination in soils includes hydrocarbons like carcinogenic benzene, toluene, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), nickel, arsenic and mercury, which seriously threaten environmental safety and human health.¹⁷
- #4 “Other” (318 spills) – We do not know the contaminants of concern for 318 of Exxon/XTO spills because the spilled material was not disclosed or listed.
- #5 Condensate (79 spills) – Condensate is a liquid hydrocarbon mixture created during the production of oil and natural gas. It is highly flammable and commonly contains carcinogens like benzene as well as hydrogen sulfide, volatile organic compounds, naphthenes and hydrocarbons like butane, hexane, propane, and pentane.¹⁸

❖ **Biggest Spill:**

- **Date:** June 9, 2017
- **Volume:** 2,429,616 gallons
- **Land: Federal public land**
- **Description:** The New Mexico Oil Conservation Division’s Incident Database lists a June 9, 2017 Exxon/XTO’s spill as “1,655 barrels” (69,510 gallons / 11 tanker trucks) released in Lea County, while the datasheet shows “0 barrels” were lost to the environment.¹⁹ However, reports inside the record for this spill reveal the real amount spilled was “approximately 57,848 bbl” (2,429,616 gallons / 386 tanker trucks) with “approximately 46,159 bbl” (1,938,678 gallons / 308 tanker trucks) “lost” to the environment and never recovered.²⁰

¹⁶ Cloelle Danforth, Weihsueh A. Chiu, Ivan Rusyn, Kim Schultz, Ashley Bolden, Carol Kwiatkowski, Elena Craft, An integrative method for identification and prioritization of constituents of concern in produced water from onshore oil and gas extraction, *Environment International*, Volume 134, 2020, 105280, ISSN 0160-4120, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2019.105280>.

¹⁷ Prabhakar Mishra, Neelakanta Sarvashiva Kiran, Luiz Fernando Romanholo Ferreira, Krishna Kumar Yadav, Sikandar I. Mulla, New insights into the bioremediation of petroleum contaminants: A systematic review, *Chemosphere*, Volume 326, 2023, 138391, ISSN 0045-6535, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chemosphere.2023.138391>.

¹⁸ [Natural Gas Condensate Archived](#) 2006-10-18 at the [Wayback Machine](#) Marathon Oil Company MSDS.

¹⁹ NM Oil Conservation Division database, [Incident # nOY1722358518](#).

²⁰ Record pulled from “Incident Files” for XTO Incident # nOY1722358518. [See file with company reported estimate here](#) (pg. 2).

❖ **Criminal Charges (Pennsylvania):**

- **2013:** Pennsylvania Attorney General filed criminal charges against XTO for the illegal spilling of fracking wastewater (produced water) at a Lycoming County site.
- **2016 Settlement:**
 - Entered an Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition program
 - Paid \$300,000 in civil penalties
 - Paid \$100,000 to a local environmental group
 - Agreed to improved wastewater management under federal oversight
- **Criticism:** Penalties criticized as modest compared to scale of pollution.
- **XTO's Position:** Denied intentional or lasting environmental harm.²¹
- **Pattern:** Many other federal, state, and tribal entities have filed charges or enforcement actions against XTO.²²

❖ **Billions in Profits (ExxonMobil):**

- **CEO Compensation:** Darren Woods received \$44.1 million in 2024, a 19% increase from the previous year.²³
- **Historic Profits:** In 2022, ExxonMobil reported record profits — \$6.3 million per hour, the highest ever for a Western oil company.²⁴
- **2024 Profits:** ExxonMobil recorded \$33.7 billion in profit while continuing to spill and pollute New Mexico.²⁵

21 Lance Murray (12 September 2013). "[XTO faces criminal charges in Pennsylvania wastewater case](#)". [Dallas Business Journal](#). Retrieved 3 September 2014.

22 [XTO Criminal Charges & Enforcement Actions](#) - a short compilation.

23 Reuters, "Exxon CEO Woods' compensation rose 19% in 2024" (April 7, 2025) [accessed online](#) 9/29/25.

24 Reuters, "Exxon smashes Western oil majors' profits with \$56 billion in 2022" (January 31, 2023) [accessed online](#) 9/29/25.

25 ExxonMobil, "ExxonMobil Announces 2024 Results" (January, 31, 2025) [accessed online](#) 9/29/25.

WildEarth Guardians' Analysis

This *Top Polluter Report* reveals:

Unmatched Spill Record

- Since 1988, ExxonMobil/XTO has reported **17,883 spills of toxic fluids and gases** in New Mexico. For nearly 40 years, that's an average of **more than one toxic spill every single day**.
- These spills amount to more than **5,053,188 gallons (120,314 barrels / 802 tanker trucks)** of toxic liquids — a convoy of waste stretching nearly **12 miles** bumper to bumper.²⁶
- Of that total, **1,869,672 gallons (44,516 barrels / 297 tanker trucks)** were permanently “lost” to the environment and never recovered — **nearly 4 in 10 gallons spilled**.

Ballooning Air Pollution

- ExxonMobil/XTO has vented or flared **6,890,815 mcf of methane and other gases**, equal to the annual emissions of **7 million cars** or **90,000 hot air balloons** — more than 10 times the number that launch at Balloon Fiesta each year.
- This underscores both the scale of ExxonMobil's pollution and the deep irony of its Balloon Fiesta sponsorship.

Ground Zero in the Permian Basin

- More than **91% of Exxon's spills** occurred in **Eddy County**, making it the undisputed ground zero of the company's pollution, with additional impacts in Lea and San Juan Counties.
- Nearly **3 in 10 spills** directly impacted **state and federal public lands**, underscoring the public's burden to bear the costs of cleanup.
- While spills on **Tribal lands** account for less than 1% overall, they pose disproportionate risks to sovereign communities least resourced to manage contamination.
- Alarming, **nearly 70% of spills have no landowner reported**, reflecting major gaps in industry transparency and state recordkeeping.

Routine Failure as Standard Practice

- More than **half of all spills (56%)** are caused by **equipment failure**, with nearly **9 out of 10 spills** attributable to just three chronic problems, including “normal operations.”
- This shows that failure isn't an accident for ExxonMobil — it's business as usual.

²⁶ Calculation based on a standard tanker truck length of approximately 70-75 feet, 5,280 ft/mile.

Biggest Spill, Biggest Concealment

- In 2017, XTO reported a **69,510-gallon spill** in Lea County. Internal records later revealed the true volume was nearly **2.43 million gallons (386 tanker trucks)**, with **1.94 million gallons (308 trucks)** lost to the environment.
- This discrepancy exposes systemic underreporting and a lack of accountability in state spill records.

Profits Over People

- While spills continue, ExxonMobil's CEO Darren Woods received **\$44.1 million in 2024** (a 19% raise), and the company pocketed **\$33.7 billion in profits**.
- Meanwhile, New Mexico ranks near the bottom nationally for child welfare, education, and health — underscoring how ExxonMobil profits while communities pay the price.

Calls to Action

WildEarth Guardians urges policymakers to act immediately to protect New Mexico's communities, water, and air from oil and gas waste:

- **Stop Toxic Waste Disasters:** Strengthen federal and state enforcement by requiring the OCD, EPA, and BLM to issue meaningful fines, deny permits for repeat violators, and publicly report all spill-related enforcement actions and outcomes.
- **Mandate Full Chemical Disclosure:** Require oil and gas companies to publicly disclose all chemicals used in drilling and fracking operations and spilled in waste, including trade secrets, to ensure transparency, public safety, and emergency preparedness.
- **Apply Hazardous Waste Laws:** Apply hazardous waste laws to oil and gas operations by removing regulatory exemptions under Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation (CERCLA), Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and similar state laws, and classify produced water and other industry byproducts as hazardous waste with strict management and disposal standards.

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