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Reducing Methane Emissions with Nitrogen

Northeast Natural Energy Launches Pilot Project to Eliminate Methane Emissions from Pneumatic Controllers

MORGANTOWN, WV, November 4, 2022— Northeast Natural Energy (Northeast) announces a pilot project aimed at eliminating a major source of fugitive methane emissions. The project involves changing the way pneumatic controllers operate at production facilities. Pneumatic controllers are used in a variety of processes to open and close valves and actuate other equipment during natural gas production operations. Very small volumes of a gas flow through tubing for use by the controllers, which, after the operation is completed, are vented to the atmosphere. Natural gas, comprised mostly of methane, is a convenient medium to use for pneumatic devices, since it is readily available at natural gas production facilities. Compressed air also works well as a medium for pneumatic controllers, but that involves installing and powering adequate air compressors. Northeast has had success switching from natural gas to compressed air, but that adds complexity to existing operations.

Earlier this year, the Northeast Production Team engaged the clean technology company, Kathairos Solutions (Kathairos), that specializes in converting pneumatic control devices from using natural gas to nitrogen. Nitrogen is an inert gas and readily available commercially throughout North America. The Kathairos system has no moving parts, requires no maintenance or onsite power and generates zero onsite methane emissions. It also utilizes existing operator equipment (with some modifications), only adding a cryogenic tank system, to store and distribute liquid nitrogen.



“From our evaluation of the Kathairos process, it is an innovative yet simple solution to completely eliminate methane emissions on these pneumatic controllers and significantly reduce maintenance of that process”, said John Landis, Northeast Production Manager. Northeast is partnering with Kathairos to install a pilot project at its MEPCO well pad in Monongalia County, West Virginia.

Dick Brown, President and CEO of Kathairos Solutions said, “Kathairos is having proven successes in the field, showing that eliminating routine site venting from pneumatic devices can be done efficiently, reliably, affordably, and sustainably. We are excited to work with Northeast Natural Energy to achieve their admirable reduction targets, using our simple yet innovative technology built around liquid nitrogen.”

SLR Consulting, the engineering firm that assists with Northeast’s greenhouse gas reporting, calculates that this project will eliminate 58 metric tons of methane emissions annually.