Flaring

When a natural gas well first produces gas, the gas needs to be tested before it can be channeled into pipes and transported for processing. In this process, it is necessary to light it on fire so it doesn’t escape unburned into the atmosphere. This is a temporary measure taken when a well is first opened up, and a destructive part of the production cycle of a gas well. For people who live near fracking, the flaring of a well sounds like an airplane taking off from their front yard, only it goes on nonstop for days or weeks with a flame that lights up people’s houses at night. The average length of a flare is 2.5 days.

In fracking fields that produce oil instead of gas, the gas is an unwanted by-product of oil extraction and is simply burned because it is not valuable enough to be captured. Oil drillers burn flares for long periods of time so that the gas does not escape unburned. All flaring results in atmospheric carbon dioxide as a by-product.

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