

# THE EPA CONFIRMS BIODEGRADATION IN LANDFILLS

Municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills are the second-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States, accounting for approximately 22 percent of these emissions in 2008. At the same time, methane emissions from landfills represent a lost opportunity to capture and use a significant energy resource. **LFG is created as solid waste decomposes in a landfill.** This gas consists of about 50 percent methane (the primary component of natural gas), about 50 percent carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), and a small amount of non-methane organic compounds. To learn more about methane emissions from landfills in the United States, visit EPA's [methane emissions and sources page](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Landfill Gas Reclamation Projects on the Rise

Using LFG for energy is a win/win opportunity. LFG utilization projects involve citizens, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and industry in sustainable community planning and create partnerships. These projects go hand-in-hand with community and corporate commitments to cleaner air, renewable energy, economic development, improved public welfare and safety, and reductions in greenhouse (global warming) gases. By linking communities with innovative ways to deal with their LFG, LMOP contributes to the creation of livable communities that enjoy increased environmental protection, better waste management, and responsible community planning.<sup>2</sup>

Nationwide, the number of landfill gas projects, which convert **methane gas emitted from decomposing garbage into power**, jumped from 399 in 2005 to 519 last year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. **As garbage decomposes, it creates gas that is half methane**, which has 20 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide, according to the EPA. Instead of letting the gas escape into the air, these projects collect the gas and treat it so it can be used for electricity or upgraded to pipeline-grade gas. The projects power homes, buildings and vehicles.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-info/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-info/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> [www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-info/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-info/index.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-02-24-landfill-energy\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-02-24-landfill-energy_N.htm)