



JIM THOMPSON/JOURNAL

People packed the public meeting held Tuesday by both the Environment and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources departments at UNM Law School to discuss new methane emissions regulations.

## Officials present methane rule-making road map

Draft of regulatory proposals and hearings expected next year

BY KEVIN ROBINSON-AVILA  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Another packed audience attended the state's second public meeting Tuesday on ways to control and reduce methane emissions in New Mexico.

About 200 people participated at the University of New Mexico Law School, about the same number who attended the state's first event in Farmington Monday. Two more meetings are also set for next week in Carlsbad, marking the opening strides in state efforts to reduce methane emissions from oil and gas operations.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham ordered both the Environment and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources departments last January to craft new regulations to control venting, flaring and leaking of methane by industry operators. The agencies organized the meetings to give environmental, industry and community representatives an opportunity to freely weigh in on the issues.

At the Albuquerque meeting, cabinet officials laid out their

next steps and strategies going forward.

The Environment Department will consider regulatory measures to control air pollution, particularly volatile organic compounds that cause ozone, or smog. Reducing VOCs will help protect human health in affected communities, while also cutting methane emissions, which are released alongside VOCs, said Environmental Protection Division Director Sandra Ely.

Eddy, Lea and San Juan counties surpassed permissible VOC emissions levels by about 2 million pounds in 2018.

"That's the equivalent of 10 natural gas plants," Ely said. "We need to bring excess emissions down."

NMED will submit its regulatory proposals to the state Environmental Improvement Board for approval.

EMNRD, meanwhile, is focused on reducing the waste of natural resources through venting, flaring and leaking of natural gas. According to monthly reports that

operators submit to EMNRD, the industry vented or flared more than 36.2 billion cubic feet of gas in 2018, costing the state \$10 million in potential revenue, said Oil Conservation Division Director Adrienne Sandoval. That's up from 25.2 billion cubic feet in 2016 and 17 billion in 2017.

"It dipped in 2017, but then shot back up last year," Ely said. "And in 2019, it's expected to be up substantially again."

EMNRD will submit its regulatory proposals to the Oil Conservation Commission for approval.

The agencies will begin drafting regulations in November after receiving feedback from a methane advisory panel of environmental and industry representatives. The panel will meet from mid-August to late October for a "deep dive" into ways to control emissions, Sandoval said.

The OCC and EIB are expected to hold public hearings on the agencies' proposals some time next year.

## SF's Sigma Labs wins contract with Airbus

Aerospace giant will use startup's technology to test its 3D printed parts

Copyright © 2019 Albuquerque Journal

BY KEVIN-ROBINSON AVILA  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

European aerospace giant Airbus is testing its 3D manufactured parts with quality assurance technology developed by Sigma Labs Inc. in Santa Fe.

Sigma announced the new contract Tuesday with Airbus, which will test the New Mexico startup's quality-control system over the next few months before deciding whether to deploy it for permanent use on 3D printing machines as part of Airbus's manufacturing process, said Sigma CEO and board Chairman John Rice.

"Airbus brought us in to prove our product will resolve some of their problems," Rice said.

The contract is part of Sigma's new Test and Evaluation Program, which the Santa Fe company launched last year, reflecting its transition into full commercial operations to sell its product worldwide. Under that program, a company pays 20% of the cost of Sigma's quality-control software and hardware system up front to test it out in their operations before fully integrating it into their manufacturing process at full price, Rice said.

That testing phase can take from one to four months.

"With Airbus, we expect upon successful completion of testing on Phase I that they'll put it on two or three other machines as well," Rice said.

That would represent up to about \$500,000 in revenue for Sigma. But the deal could well grow into a multimillion-dollar contract if Airbus deploys Sigma's system on many of the other 3D printing machines the aerospace company operates, Rice said.

The company, which launched in 2010, had concentrated on research and development of its technology for years. It signed contracts with original equipment manufacturers such as Honeywell Aerospace and some European companies that focus on 3D printing, such as Siemens Indus-



John Rice



See SIGMA LABS >> A11

## U.S. consumer confidence up sharply in July

BY PAUL WISEMAN  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — American consumer confidence rebounded this month to the highest level since November, after dropping in June.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose to 135.7 in July from 124.3 in June. The bounceback from last month's drop was much stronger than economists expected.

The index measures consumers' assessment of current economic conditions and their expectations for the next six months. Both rose substantially in July.

Consumers shrugged off trade tensions with China and a slowing U.S. economy.

Economists keep close watch on consumers' spirits because their spending accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity. The government reported last week that consumer spending rose at a 4.3% annual rate from April



JOHN LOCHER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Linda Looney restocks shirts at the Alien Research Center, a gift shop on the Extraterrestrial Highway in Crystal Springs, Nevada. The Conference Board has issued its latest report on U.S. consumer confidence for July.

through June, the fastest pace since the end of 2017.

The overall economy grew at a 2.1% pace in the second quarter, down from 3.1% from January-March. But Americans are enjoying unusual job security: The unemployment rate has come

in below 4% for 13 of the past 15 months.

Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at the Conference Board, says the sustained confidence should continue to support robust spending in the near term.

## Consumer spending up 0.3% in June; incomes rise 0.4%

*Economists optimistic about solid gains in the second half of the year*

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Consumer spending rose a healthy 0.3% in June, slightly below the strong gains of the past three months, while incomes turned in a solid 0.4% gain for the fourth straight month.

The Commerce Department said Tuesday that the spending increase followed strong gains of 1% in March, 0.6% in April and 0.5% in May as consumer spending rebounded following a lackluster start to the year.

An inflation gauge favored by the Federal Reserve showed prices rising 1.4% over the past year, well below the Fed's 2% inflation target. Fed officials are widely expected to reduce their benchmark interest rate

for the first time in a decade at this week's meeting, in part because of the continued shortfall in inflation despite strong economic growth and unemployment at near a 50-year low.

The overall economy slowed to a growth rate of 2.1% in the April-June quarter from 3.1% in the first quarter as the trade deficit, which is a drag on growth, widened and businesses cut back on capital investment. The slowdown would have much more severe if consumer spending had not rebounded following a sharp slowdown in the first quarter.

Consumer spending grew at an annual rate of 4.3% in the second quarter after a disappointingly weak 1.1% gain in the first quarter. Economists are optimistic that consumer spending, which accounts for 70% of economic activity, will continue to show solid gains in the second half of this year.

THE MARKETS DOW 27,198.02 -23.33 S&P 500 3,013.18 -7.79 NASDAQ 8,273.61 -19.71 NYSE 13,187.21 -35.40



Board Certified Physicians



ALBUQUERQUE ER & HOSPITAL

Paseo Del Norte & Coors (NE Corner)

24/7 Emergency Care  
WHY WAIT?

All Insurances Accepted

\*Excluding Medicare, Medicaid & Tricare