



THE SNIFFERS®

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THE SNIFFERS MAKES METHANE ITS MISSION

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Methane emissions are the key watchwords in the oil and gas industry this year. Awareness is growing about methane's much greater potency as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. But fortunately, its atmospheric lifecycle is also much shorter, meaning action today can yield faster results.

The Sniffers is a Belgian company with global reach that has been helping companies tackle their emissions for 30 years. Initially using dogs to detect leaks in chemical installations, the company invested in the 2000s in specialised detection equipment and now offers a wide range of services to detect and quantify emissions, energy losses and pipeline defects.

In 2019, The Sniffers honed its focus on methane emissions with the launch of its Methane Accounting Programme, to help oil and gas operators realise their ambitions in this area, employing its team of over 90 technical specialists in 35 countries. The programme received the Energy Institute Environment Award in 2020.

"We are educating companies about solutions for reducing emissions and then helping them execute those solutions," The Sniffers CEO Bart Wauterickx says. "And we are seeing fantastic results. In some cases, the companies achieve reductions of as much as 70% in a single year."

The European Commission is preparing to publish its legislative proposal on addressing energy sector methane emissions later this year, and new methane regulations are on the horizon in the US and other jurisdictions. The Sniffers' services help operators prepare for these regulations, enabling them to quantify their emissions accurately and transparently, which could give them a financial advantage over the competition.

HOW DOES THE SNIFFERS DO THIS?

"First we need an in-depth understanding of both the customer's assets and their ambitions," Wauterickx explains. "Some companies are very ambitious and aren't just interested in ticking the regulatory boxes. They want to apply the best in-class techniques."

The Sniffers starts by developing a customised work programme for its customer, undertaking field emission surveys that start with a bottom-up inventory of all potentially emitting sources, in order to get accurate and reliable measurements. All technologies and approaches are considered, and a balance is struck between accuracy and costs.

Customers are then given a detailed report on their emissions that includes recommended steps to eliminate them. After actions are taken, The Sniffers goes back and reassesses the assets to draw a comparison.

The Sniffers offers its services across various infrastructure, from wells, flares and processing plants to pipelines and compressor units.

"Fugitive emissions are the most difficult to identify and quantify – and this is our bread and butter activity," Wauterickx explains. "But vented emissions are also extremely important, and in some cases they can account for 50% of a customer's emissions."

The Sniffers recently partnered with data analytics firm Kayrros, which tracks emissions using satellite data, to offer their respective customers each other's services. While they cannot identify the smaller methane leaks, satellites excel at identifying super-emitters unknown to operators.

The Sniffers' main market is Europe, though it has significant business in the Middle East and at other locations, working for leading producers that include BP, Shell, TotalEnergies, Exxon-Mobil, Equinor, Saudi Aramco and ADNOC.

"We are one of the few companies in this field with global reach," Wauterickx said. "As a strategic partner, we can apply the same quality standards at international companies' assets wherever they may be."