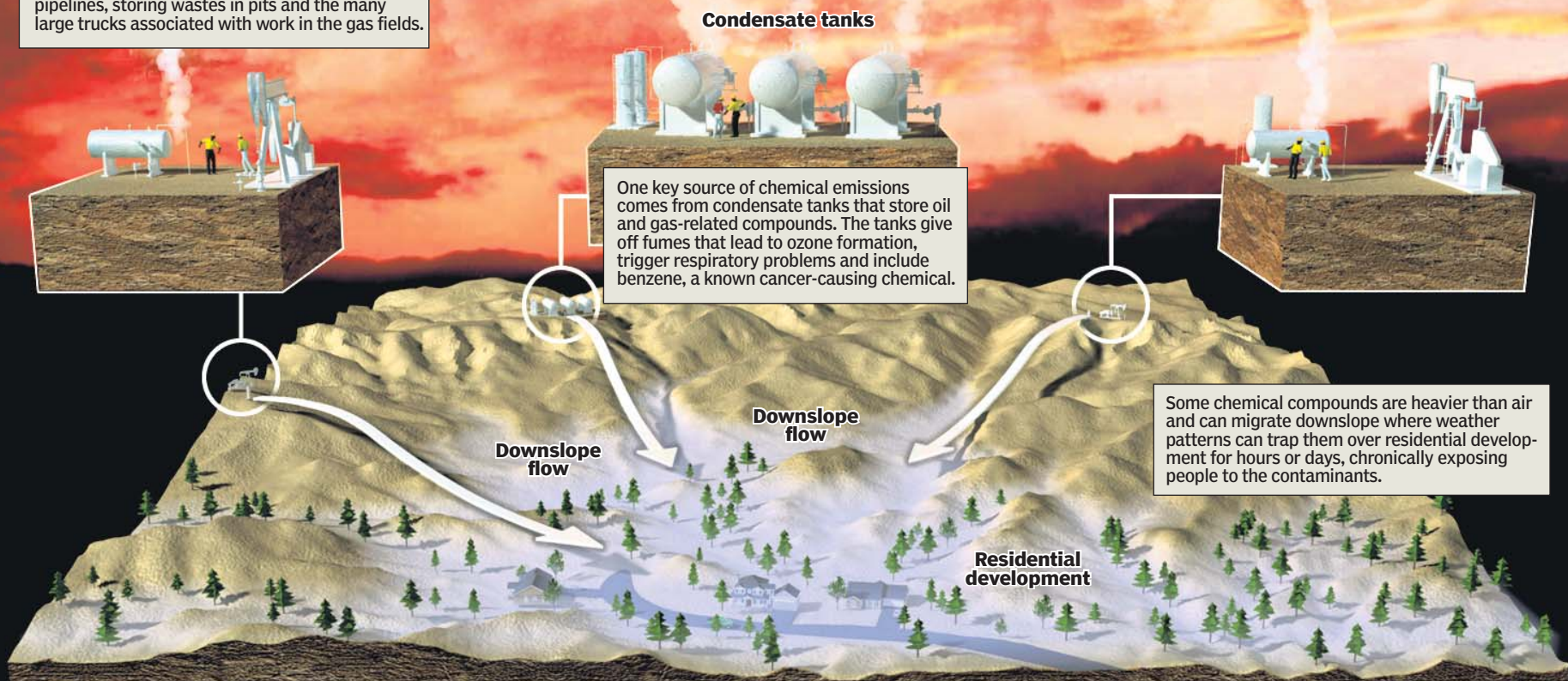


Gasping in the gas fields

Some residents living near gas operations on the Western Slope and in several other states have complained of a variety of ailments, including headaches, dizziness, burning eyes, breathing problems, skin rashes and sore throats.

Every stage of the oil and gas production process creates a variety of chemical emissions: drilling wells, removing and storing oil and gas, running large engines that compress products into pipelines, storing wastes in pits and the many large trucks associated with work in the gas fields.



One key source of chemical emissions comes from condensate tanks that store oil and gas-related compounds. The tanks give off fumes that lead to ozone formation, trigger respiratory problems and include benzene, a known cancer-causing chemical.

Some chemical compounds are heavier than air and can migrate downslope where weather patterns can trap them over residential development for hours or days, chronically exposing people to the contaminants.

THE ISSUES: Some health specialists and activists suggest chemicals released in the gas fields, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (commonly abbreviated as BTEX) are likely to settle into troughs and valleys where people live, possibly leading to health problems. But very little research has been conducted on such exposure, activists complain, making it hard to draw conclusions.

Source: Rocky Mountain News Research; Oil & Gas Accountability Project

Common contaminants
Gas operations — from drilling to storing to transporting — involve many contaminants. A sampling:

Pollutant	Source
Tiny particles	Diesel trucks, venting and flaring of natural gas
Nitrogen oxides	Compressor engines, diesel trucks, flaring
Hydrogen sulfide	Venting and flaring
Benzene	Venting and flaring, waste pits storing various drilling chemicals
Sulfur dioxide	Diesel trucks, natural gas engine exhaust, waste pits
Diesel fuel	Drilling chemicals, engines and heavy equipment
Volatile organic compounds	Venting and flaring, waste pits, engines, compressors