

Google says it won't build AI tools for oil and gas drillers (Update)

May 19 2020, by Matt O'brien



In this April 21, 2020 file photo, a pumpjack is pictured as the sun sets in Oklahoma City. Google says it won't build custom artificial intelligence tools for speeding up oil and gas extraction, taking an environmental stance that distinguishes it from cloud computing rivals Microsoft and Amazon. The announcement followed a Greenpeace report on Tuesday, May 19, that documents how the three tech giants are using AI and computing power to help oil companies find and access oil and gas deposits in the U.S. and around the world. (AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki File)

Google says it will no longer build custom artificial intelligence tools for speeding up oil and gas extraction, separating itself from cloud computing rivals Microsoft and Amazon.

A statement from the company Tuesday followed a Greenpeace report that documents how the three tech giants are using AI and computing power to help oil companies find and access oil and gas deposits in the U.S. and around the world.

The environmentalist group says Amazon, Microsoft and Google have been undermining their own climate change pledges by partnering with major oil companies including Shell, BP, Chevron and ExxonMobil that have looked for new technology to get more oil and gas out of the ground.

But the group applauded Google on Tuesday for taking a step away from those deals.

"While Google still has a few legacy contracts with oil and gas firms, we welcome this indication from Google that it will no longer build custom solutions for upstream oil and gas extraction," said Elizabeth Jardim, senior corporate campaigner for Greenpeace USA.

Google said it will honor all existing contracts with its customers, but didn't specify what companies. A Google cloud executive had earlier in May revealed the new policy during a video interview.

Greenpeace's report says Microsoft appears to be leading the way with the most oil and contracts, "offering AI capabilities in all phases of oil production." Amazon's contracts are more focused on pipelines, shipping and fuel storage, according to the report. Their tools have been deployed

to speed up shale extraction, especially from the Permian Basin of Texas and New Mexico.

Some of the contracts have led to internal protests by employees who are pushing their companies to do more to combat climate change.

Amazon declined to comment on the Greenpeace report, but pointed to wording on its website that said "the energy industry should have access to the same technologies as other industries."

Microsoft published a blog statement Tuesday that didn't address Greenpeace's claims but emphasized the company's commitment to remove from the air all the carbon it has ever emitted by 2050.

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Citation: Google says it won't build AI tools for oil and gas drillers (Update) (2020, May 19) retrieved 16 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-05-google-ai-oil-gas.html>

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