

# Data centers in Oregon linked to a rise in rare cancers and other medical conditions due to toxic wastewater contamination in the local water supply.

## AI Overview

A *Rolling Stone* investigation published in November 2025 has linked a cluster of [Amazon Web Services \(AWS\)](#) data centers in Morrow County, Oregon, to severe environmental pollution, specifically elevated nitrate levels in groundwater, which local residents and officials have correlated with a surge in rare cancers and miscarriages. The report describes the situation as a "data center-induced water crisis," bearing similarities to the contamination issues in Flint, Michigan.

### Key Findings of the Report

- **Contamination Mechanism:** The data centers require immense amounts of water for cooling. The facilities draw groundwater from an aquifer already contaminated with nitrates—a byproduct of decades of industrial agriculture—and return it to the water system at a much higher concentration.
- **Nitrate Concentration:** The used water, which contains high levels of concentrated, non-evaporating pollutants, is sprayed onto surrounding farmland and seeps back into the local aquifer.
- **Health Impact:** A survey of 70 wells in the area found that 68 exceeded federal nitrate limits, with reports of 25 miscarriages and multiple cases of kidney failure among residents of the first 30 homes checked.
- **Scope of Impact:** The investigation focused on Morrow County in Eastern Oregon, which has become a major hub for Amazon's data infrastructure since 2011.

### Amazon's Response and Counterarguments

Amazon has strongly denied the claims, describing the *Rolling Stone* reporting as "misleading and inaccurate".

- **Pre-existing Pollution:** The company maintains that the area's groundwater problems "significantly predate" their presence.
- **Minimal Impact Claim:** Amazon stated that the volume of water used and returned represents only a small fraction of the overall system.
- **No Added Nitrates:** The company asserted that its cooling process does not add nitrates to the water.

### Broader Implications

The report has raised concerns beyond Oregon, particularly in central Ohio, which has seen a rapid expansion of data centers (133 total). The situation has also prompted discussion about the environmental footprint of AI and the "digital smog" caused by the high energy and water demands of these massive facilities.

*Disclaimer: The information above is based on reporting from late 2025 and represents accusations and investigations, which the involved company has disputed.*

This is for informational purposes only. For medical advice or diagnosis, consult a professional. [AI responses may include mistakes.](#)