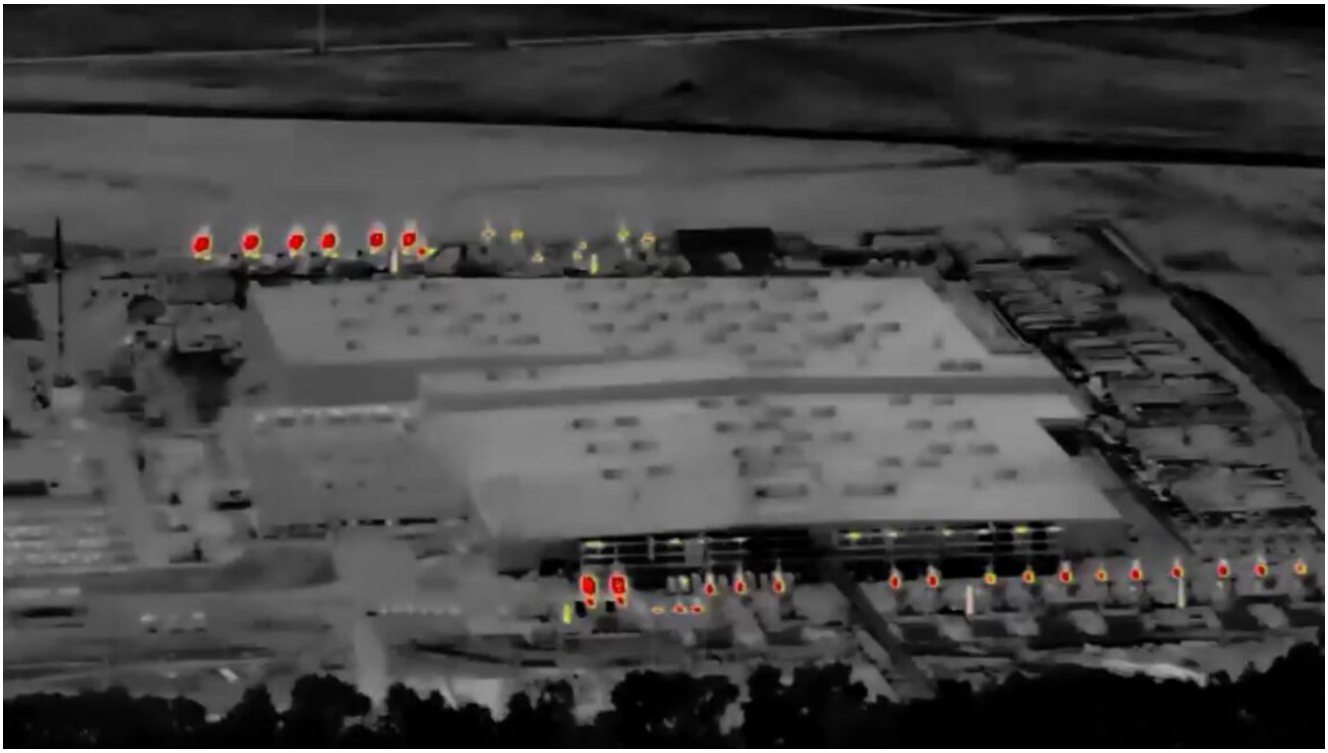
Thermal imaging shows xAI lied about supercomputer pollution, group says



xAI's submission claimed that each of the 15 turbines "is equipped with Solar's Dry Low Emission (DLE)/SoLoNOx control technology" and other systems to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds. For those reasons, xAI expects to be granted permits, the submission suggests.

However, even before xAI's construction began, Shelby County was already in violation of the eight-hour ozone standard that protects public health, which means that xAI may need to implement additional controls.

The health department's hearing will be the first time the public will have a chance to push for better accountability. Seemingly hoping to quell the backlash, the strange fliers seem like an attempt to push back by sowing discord.

“Those 15 xAI turbines?” the fliers distributed to thousands of Memphis residents said. “They’re specially designed to protect the air we all breathe.”

Nothing directly links xAI to the fliers. But xAI will have to play defense, as it has no plans to slow down its data center expansion, with its leading supercomputer facing immense competition to dominate the AI industry. Musk swore the rapid construction and subsequent work to double the size were “just the beginning,” while the xAI website boasts that “no one has come close to building at this magnitude and speed.”

The company has already invested $7 billion into the data center, and those costs will only grow. To keep pace, xAI has already earmarked recent funding to “further accelerate our advanced infrastructure,” a December blog noted. Further, researchers expect that “within six years, building the leading AI data center may cost $200 billion,” TechCrunch reported Friday, so those costs will likely keep growing, while likely deepening Musk’s entrenchment in Memphis and any feared pollution from that into the foreseeable future.

Additionally, products dependent on the data center will keep Musk’s facility humming in Memphis. The primary use of xAI’s supercomputer today is to fuel Grok, the chatbot running on posts from Musk’s social network X. In February, xAI unveiled a preview of its most advanced version of Grok yet, and other “groundbreaking” products are in the pipeline, X’s blog said.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/04/elon-musks-xai-accused-of-lying-to-black-communities-about-harmful-pollution/