Three orphan wells in Warren County. Size of flame in descending order (no smell of gas and no ability to light the well in the third picture). We would not use this method if the smell of gas was significant and/or the sound of the release was loud. But at these orphaned conventional oil wells the amount of release is invariably small. We approach the safety the same as a backyard barbecue grill—you don't open the grill knob to full (such that the flow of propane is significantly audible) to light. Likewise we check the flow from the orphan well before attempting to light. I've never encountered an orphan oil well that had flow as significant as an audible barbecue grill flow, and therefore I have never encountered an orphan oil well that I concluded was unsafe to test via lighting the flow of gas. Contrast that with leaks I have encountered at high pressure wells—I would never attempt to light those leaks because, judging from sound and smell alone, the flow is much greater than a barbecue grill or kitchen stove.

We all have these accumulated skills from dealing with home stoves and barbecue grills and the same skill is applicable to these very low flow/zero pressure orphan wells. It is a terrible waste of dollars to ignore these accumulated skills.