Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands, TX — #1 of 10: R&D Services Establishments

Houston Leads Texas in AI Safety R&D

411 establishments — more than the next two metros combined.

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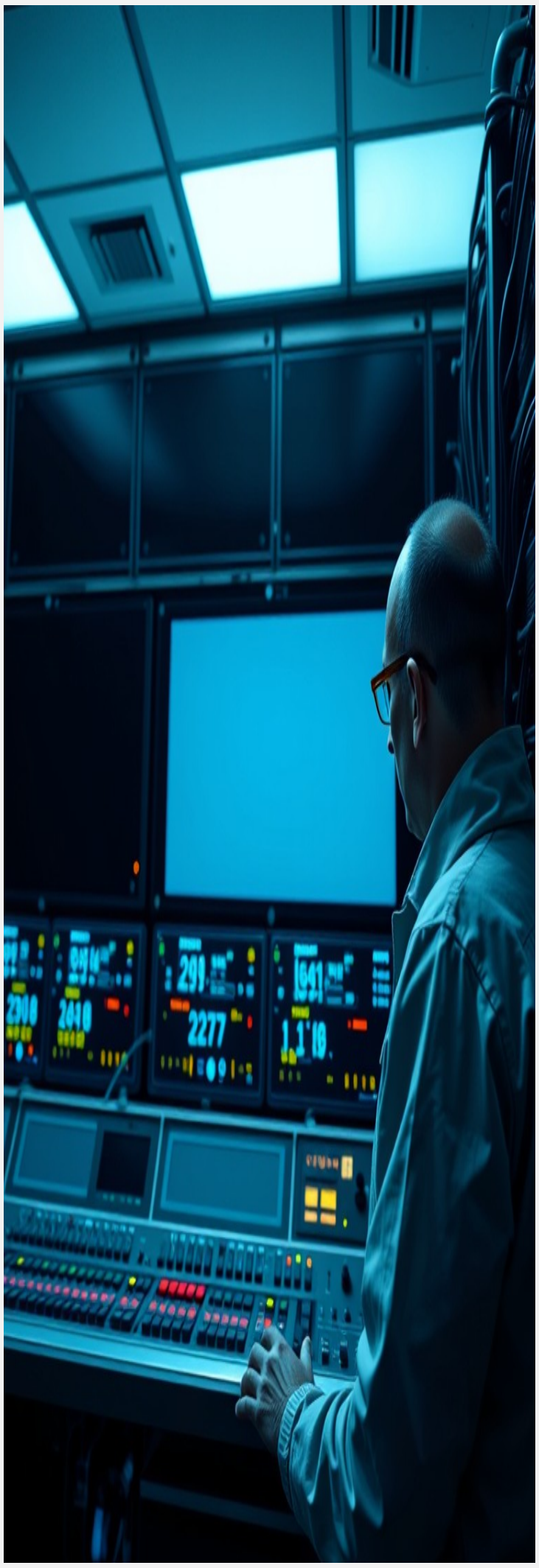
THE DATA

411

R&D Services Establishments

Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands, TX hosts the most AI safety research firms in Texas.

The Houston metro area accounts for over half of all scientific R&D services establishments in Texas, with 411 firms in the NAICS 5417 category. This dominance reflects a deep institutional foundation in technology, energy, and advanced engineering that has evolved into a critical hub for AI safety and ethics research. The concentration suggests a strategic advantage in attracting talent and investment in responsible AI development.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2022 · Published November 09, 2026
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-09-ai-safety-ind-5417-msa

01

Concentration Drives Innovation

The clustering of 411 R&D establishments in Houston creates a network effect: shared infrastructure, specialized labor pools, and cross-sector collaboration between energy tech, biomedical engineering, and AI safety. This density reduces transaction costs and accelerates knowledge transfer, making Houston not just a location but a system of innovation. Such ecosystems are rare and hard to replicate, giving the region a durable competitive edge in global AI governance research.



02

The Risk of Centralization

While Houston’s dominance in AI safety R&D is impressive, it also presents a systemic risk: over-reliance on a single metro area. If geopolitical, regulatory, or infrastructure disruptions affect the region, the entire state’s capacity for responsible AI development could be compromised. This underscores the need for strategic investment in secondary innovation hubs across Texas to ensure resilience and equitable access to AI governance infrastructure.

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