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Embargoed Until Dec. 12, 2023 5 a.m. EST

Oregonians exposed to hazardous levels of pollution from gas stoves, new study finds

Report shows evidence that vents don't capture pollutants known to cause asthma, which then accumulate to toxic levels throughout the home

EUGENE, Ore. — A new study from Beyond Toxics reveals that cooking with gas stoves and ovens not only releases dangerous levels of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) but also that ventilation systems such as exhaust hoods overwhelmingly fail to capture toxic fumes, allowing them to spread throughout the home. These toxic chemicals are known to cause asthma, cancer, and other illnesses.

A Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera allowed Beyond Toxics to visualize pollution from gas appliances that is not visible to the naked eye. By combining data from this camera with air quality monitors, Beyond Toxics determined that 82% of homes studied had chronically hazardous levels of NO₂ present while a stove was on. Additionally, 94% of homes had ventilation systems that failed to capture the fumes being released from stove-top burners and ovens.

Beyond Toxics produced both a documentary and a report, "Fumes in Focus: Visualizing air pollution from gas stoves," detailing these findings. These embargoed materials are available [here](#).

"With this study, we sought to build Oregonians' understanding of the health risks from the gas stoves in their kitchen using specialized cameras to make invisible pollutants visible. Many studies have shown just how dangerous pollution levels can be in homes that cook with gas, but for many, seeing is believing," said **Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics**.

The report builds on dozens of independent studies that have connected gas stoves to hazardous air quality in homes and respiratory problems like asthma. According to [one study](#), gas stoves are associated with a 42% increased risk of current asthma symptoms in children and a 24% increased lifetime risk of an asthma diagnosis. Another [study](#) released earlier this year from researchers at RMI, University of Sydney, and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that gas stove pollution can be attributed to more than 12% – or one in eight – of childhood asthma cases nationwide. That's a similar level of childhood asthma risk as living with secondhand smoke.

The FLIR footage in the report provides a visual depiction of the pollutants when the stove is on. Pollutants shoot directly up from burners, and often blow right past any ventilation systems, spreading around the kitchen before moving to other areas of the house.

In interviews with the participants for the video documentary, households were generally surprised to learn about the pollution impacts from the gas stoves in their homes. One Eugene participant, John Webster, upgraded his family's exhaust hood before the FLIR footage was taken. He was shocked to learn that the upgrade did little to help mitigate the spread of toxic fumes, and found out the pollutants from their gas stove accumulated most in his daughters bedroom, across from the kitchen.

"We weren't aware of the hidden health risk associated with using gas in our home," said Webster. "When you're preparing a meal, you think you're nourishing your family — but it turns out that when you're cooking with gas, you could actually be harming their health. That is deeply concerning."

Beyond Toxics' findings come on the heels of a recent NPR investigation, which reported that fossil fuel companies have pulled extensively from Big Tobacco's playbook in an attempt to undermine and hide the risks of gas stoves — even hiring some of the very same researchers and public relations firms employed by Big Tobacco.

In response, so far seven current and former elected officials in Oregon have signed a letter calling on the Oregon Attorney General to investigate and curtail deceptive communications from NW Natural about the public health risk that gas presents.

"This important film documents our worst fears about the impact of gas on our health. There is no denying the evidence that natural gas cooking stoves fill not only our kitchens but our homes with the toxic byproducts of burning methane," said **Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis**, who has signed the letter to the Attorney General. "As a mayor, I recognize our obligation to support communities in protecting themselves from this insidious and pervasive pollution by upgrading to healthier electric cooking stoves as quickly as possible."

A [virtual news conference](#) is scheduled for Dec. 12 at 11 a.m. to discuss the findings of this report and answer any questions. Speakers include Arkin, GIS and Spatial Data Coordinator Mason Leavitt, and Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis, Representatives Mark Gamba and Khanh Pham. We will open the meeting at 10:50 a.m. to share the Fumes in Focus mini documentary for those to wish to view it.

Beyond Toxics provides leadership to build a community-driven environmental justice movement for a thriving and just Oregon. We envision a society where everyone has equitable access to healthy food and clean air and water, and underserved communities are included in decision making processes that affect them. Together, we move beyond the damaging environmental practices of the past and collectively work to support and maintain ecological resilience and balance.