

Gas Appliances: What is the fuss about replacing them? (P 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, the Climate Corps Fellow for CAP OC's Energy and Environmental Services department. This blog will dive into the push for homeowners to replace gas-powered appliances in the face of climate change.

In recent years, many studies have come out demonstrating how gas stoves are a major source of pollution in households. Scientists found that gas stoves and ovens release toxic pollutants into the air, including various carcinogens like benzene and carbon monoxide. It is believed that the use of gas stoves has contributed to nearly 13 percent of childhood asthma cases in the United States. For these reasons, there has been a big push for homeowners to replace their old gas stoves with new, electric ones.

While the transition to electric can be beneficial to our health, it is not always the easiest decision to make. Many factors can affect individuals' ability to consider replacing an essential home appliance. Disposable income; reliance on stoves for cooking and heating; and home energy infrastructure can hinder an individual's ability to make the best-informed decision. This article will break down some of the reasons why you should consider replacing your gas stove with an electric one.

#### **Indoor Air Pollution**

As many of us are familiar with, gas stoves run on natural gas, producing a flame to cook on and releasing various chemicals into the kitchen space as a result of that

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combustion. Natural gas is a fossil fuel, despite what the name implies, and is primarily composed of methane, a known greenhouse gas. Gas stoves burn this methane which creates pollutants that can irritate the airways, make asthma worse, and damage the lungs. Combustion, or the burning of a material, can transform chemicals into other substances due to heat; This is how carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, and benzene are found in living spaces. Prolonged exposure to these chemicals can have harmful effects on the body and cause serious health problems later in life. Those with preexisting chronic health conditions, under 5 or over 60 years of age, are more likely to be negatively impacted by indoor air pollution.

#### **Comfort and Safety**

Aside from gas-powered stoves being a source of pollution in your home, they are also a huge fire hazard. Any electrical appliance can be a fire hazard, but gaspowered stoves create open flames inside homes in enclosed spaces. According to "The ABC's of Electrifying Your Home" from ActiveSGV, a community-based organization out in the San Gabriel Valley, "Gas is highly flammable and can cause fires or explosions if the appliance or gas pipes get damaged, which can happen during an earthquake." California's fire risk is already high enough; Gas stoves increase the risk of fires being started in urban areas through a gas leak or explosion.

### Climate Solutions: Replacing your gas stove lowers your carbon footprint.

As mentioned previously, natural gas is mainly comprised of methane, which a shortlived climate pollutant that has strong heat-trapping capabilities. Excessive methane released into the atmosphere, either through extraction or other activities, will negatively impact the planet, contributing to overall rising temperatures and the frequency of severe weather events. Burning methane is not better as it creates carbon dioxide (CO2), another greenhouse gas that enters and contributes to the heat-trapping effect occurring in the atmosphere.

### Why the Transition to Electric is Important

We have covered three compelling reasons why you should consider replacing your gas stove with an electric one. The last reason CAP OC believes you should replace your gas stove with an electric one is to promote resilience.

Here at CAP OC, we recognize the financial burden old, energy-intensive appliances can have on householders. Older gas stoves are more likely to be high energy

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consumers due to age and innovations in energy systems. All appliances degrade due to age, losing their efficiency and consuming more energy as time goes on. Newer appliances, including high-efficiency gas top stoves, use less energy to perform the same tasks. If you are considering replacing your gas stove, Energy Star is a good reference point to start with. Energy Star appliances are energy efficient and have lower operating costs compared to other models.

### The Cons of Electrification

While moving away from fossil fuels will always be better for our climate, not everyone can afford to transition to an electric lifestyle, regardless of want or need. Many older homes cannot support energy-efficient appliances as their electric infrastructure is old and outdated. The switch to electric from gas is not cheap either; it may require new wiring and other retrofits to be done before an electric stove can be installed, racking up the cost of the upgrade. Home maintenance is no easy feat, but through active and intentional investments into your home, you can keep your home up to date, energy efficient, comfortable, and healthy.

CAP OC offers three different Healthy Home services that can help you upgrade and retrofit your home to be safe, comfortable, and healthy. Our Weatherization program provides permanent home modifications that can significantly reduce customers' energy costs for those who qualify. Examples of weatherization can be upgrading the HVAC system, installing new energy-efficient appliances, sealing any cracks or holes in the physical structure, and improving ventilation. To learn more about this program, contact <u>energy@capoc.org</u> or call at (714) 839-6199 ext. 6208.

We also offer 2 home modification California Advancing & Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Community Supports through in partnership with CalOptima Health, OC's primary Medi-Cal health care provider: Asthma Remediation (for CalOptima members with severe asthma) and Environmental Accessibility Adaptations, or EAA (for CalOptima members who have mobility issues and need modifications in their home to function safely and independently). To learn more about these programs, please email calaimsupport@capoc.org or call 714-839-6199 ext. 6315.

Sources:

(1) Gas stoves are even worse for our health than previously known, new study finds

- (2) Reality Check: Gas Stoves Are a Health and Climate Problem
- (3) What to Know About the Risks of Gas Stoves and Appliances
- (4) The ABC'S of Electrifying Your Gas Appliances



Hollywood Climate Summit: The Importance of Cross-Sectoral Work (Page 1 of 5)

This week's blog is about our Climate Corps Fellow Briana Ancona's experience at the Hollywood Climate Summit, a cross-sectoral week-long conference focusing on sustainability and climate justice within the film and media industries.

The Hollywood Climate Summit began five years ago, "[organizing] high-energy events and coordinat[ing] creative partnerships for cross-sector media professionals to level up their climate knowledge, align strategies, deepen intersectional values, showcase innovation, and lead a cultural movement of sustained climate action," according to their website. I attended this conference because I was interested in learning what sustainability actions were being taken to reduce the carbon footprint of the film and media industry. This year's summit was hosted at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills. I attended Tuesday, June 25th and Thursday, June 27th with a two-day student/activist pass. This pass was 70 dollars, or 35 dollars per day, making it extremely affordable and accessible. They also offered financial assistance for those interested in attending but would be unable to due to financial constraints.

### Day One - Tuesday, June 25th

Tuesday, June 25th kicked off the conference, with doors opening at 3:30 pm and speaker events starting at 4:30 pm. As soon as I entered the conference, I was greeted by an array of tables showing off several options of vegan food options,



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community-based organizations, entrepreneurs and more. Coming into the event, I knew that the Summit was working with Earth Angel Sets, a "full-service sustainability agency dedicated to reducing the environmental impact of entertainment productions." What I didn't know was how thorough and diligent Earth Angel staff and volunteers were; When I would go fill up my water bottle at the refill station, workers would be sorting trash and placing waste in the appropriate receptacles.

As someone who is concerned with waste management and sustainability in the workplace, it was very refreshing to see the intentionality behind every action taken to divert waste from landfills. All utensils and plates were compostable, and the cups provided by r.World, a reusable serveware service. These cups had a designated waste bin, allowing the company to collect all cups at the end of the night, clean and disinfect them, and set them up for the next day. I was very impressed by the attention to detail the event planners had and their ability to make an environmentalist stop worrying about their impact on the environment.

After having a light snack and some water, I made my way up the stairs, to my seat in the theatre. The first event, A New Paradigm, had panelists discussing the importance of intersectionality and sustainability within an industry like Hollywood. This conversation was deeply aligned with the intent of the summit, which is to bring together professionals across sectors who work in the "Hollywood" industry and beyond. There were discussions of representation in media and communication of climate justice within personal narratives.

A big part of the fight for climate justice is storytelling. The ability to captivate your audience is crucial in mobilizing people to act against climate change. Film and digital media is an incredibly influential tool that can help people form opinions on certain issues. The first widely available film was a propaganda film named Birth of a Nation. Movies have a legacy of being used to influence the public, therefore it is incredibly important that contemporary filmmakers and screenwriters integrate



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equity and social justice considerations within their workflow. This ranges from advocating for a "green" set or including causal climate conversations between characters. Certain people may object, citing that involving climate in media is unnecessary and pointless, but to say that it is pointless implies that all social issues discussed in TV and media are useless. As we know, this is untrue because art reflects reality and is created through people's lived experiences. Many people have been affected by climate change; therefore, it is necessary to talk about climate change in media. Even in children's media.

The second event of the evening began at 6:30 pm and covered climate education and communication within the media. The panel, NextGen Viewers: Communicating Climate in Children's Media, dove into conversations of cultural relevance in environmental education and the importance of collaboration between researchers and storytellers to facilitate science communication. Something that really stood out to me was the fact that children grow up in an adult world, exposed to several complex social issues and often, lacking the ability to talk about it with others. Everyone grows up having difficult conversations, therefore, there is a responsibility on behalf of writers to have those difficult conversations on screen in a serious-yet-child-friendly way. This is something I feel is lacking in current educational curricula. Where these education gaps exist, media can fill them with creative and insightful climate stories.

This panel was incredibly insightful as I see myself working in science communication and writing in the future. There were several experts on the panel, including Isabel González Whitaker from the Moms Clean Air Force, a community of over a million moms and dads united against air pollution. Whitaker spoke about the importance of extending the conversation of sustainability beyond the individual and shifting it into a community responsibility. Most people want to do good, they just do not know where to start. Having conversations around climate change and sustainability will enhance others' understanding of climate justice. Climate stewardship will help raise the general consciousness and knowledge about a topic, inspiring political will (i.e. taking action in civics).

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### Day 3 - Thursday, June 27th

I kicked off my second day of attendance by attending a virtual session at 3 pm. This virtual session was presented by The Nature Conservancy and discussed the impending peril of the biodiversity crisis. As climate change worsens day by day, Earth's delicate ecosystems are unable to adapt quickly enough to survive extreme changes to biodiversity. In this panel, scientists gave real-life examples of how the decline of just one species can topple entire ecosystems. They then shared examples of their work and success stories that can serve as a model for change in the fight for climate justice.

The first in-person session began at 4:30 pm. The panel, Infinite Possibilities: Imagining Life In A Climate Altered World, had panelists discuss the importance of incorporating climate change in world-building. Oftentimes, viewers forget about the background and set design in a movie as those elements are used to establish mood and atmosphere to support the media's storyline. There was a great discussion between panelists explaining how they can use climate to fuel plot progression or be the antagonists in a story. For example, in Twister, the tornados are also symbols of the character's fears and manifestations of chaos.

After this panel, I took some time to look around the networking hall and see what organizations were tabling in the hall. Here, I spent some time networking and conversing with some attendees I met on my first day. The last event I had planned to attend was the Innovating for Tomorrow: Cross-Sector Leaders Advancing Climate Transformation panel.

I was especially looking forward to this panel because one of the founders of the Green Jobs Board was moderating the conversation. Kristy Drutman's story exemplified the importance of cross-sectoral platforms. In light of the growing need for climate-conscious jobs, the green economy saw exponential growth across all sectors. The issue was many college graduates found it difficult to find "green jobs", including Drutman.



# Green Job Resources – Where to look and what to know (Page 5 of 5)

According to an interview with noted in an interview with Kristy and other cofounder Fahimullah,

"Our whole mission is about connecting job seekers to a pathway that makes it easier for them to meet employers who are all building a collective green economy together. What that means is we are not just providing jobs, but we are also providing educational content, workshops, and more community around what it means to get a green job, not just a list of jobs, even though we do that too, of course."

The Green Jobs Board is how I found my job because I was having problems finding jobs relevant to me and my academic background. Through this platform, I not only learned what a fellowship is but ended up in the Spring 2024 Climate Corps fellowship cohort. If it were not for the work of environmentalists and climate champions like Kristy Drutman, many graduates in the environmental sector, including myself, wouldn't be in the positions they are in today if it were not for the Green Jobs Board.

The panel ended the night off on a great note, giving the audience insight into what the media and film industries are doing to shape sustainability in the industry.

#### My Takeaway

From sustainability in action to future ponderings of climate to seeing the grim realities of climate change, it seems that more people than I thought have a passion for sustainability and climate justice. I say these two words often because sustainability and climate justice are inextricably intertwined. As is climate justice and social justice, which has been captured on film for countless years. There were a lot of amazing partnerships happening across industries, with a particular emphasis on promoting circular economies. As an industry that evolves rapidly, must be constructed and deconstructed often and adapt, it is beyond important to see where things can improve and how we can lessen consumption within the industry.



# National Honeybee Day – Beyond the Iconic Black and Yellow (Page 1 of 5)

### This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, the Climate Corps Fellow for CAP OC's Energy and Environmental Services department

This August 17th is World Honey Bee Day! Honey bees are iconic insects that work hard and play a large role in our environment by pollinating flowers, contributing to biological diversity. Honey bees are, as you might guess, bees that make honey! Honeybees live in colonies, with one queen in a hive and thousands of worker bees. These worker bees collect pollen and nectar, which is then stored in the hive and transformed into honey.

Despite the huge prevalence of honey in our stores, there are only seven species of over 20,000 bees that are considered honeybees. Most bees are solitary bees and do not live in hives. In fact, honeybees are not even native to North America; they are native to the Pan-African-Eurasia continent.

California alone is home to 1600 species of native bees, most of which are solitary, living underground in tunnels and in wood, and do not produce honey. The female bee will collect pollen and make a nest to lay eggs where as the male bee only exists for reproductive purposes. Regardless, all bees play a vital role in ecosystem health.

In the wake of climate change, biodiversity has declined due to a variety of reasons. You may have heard the phrase "save the bees" but the sentiment goes beyond

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bees. It is a call to action. The biggest driver to the decline in biodiversity is habitat loss. Industries like logging and agriculture have caused once lush, biodiverse landscapes to become overworked, polluted landscapes. Pesticides, habitat loss, disease and pests because of climate change will affect all pollinators, not just bees.

According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, "While bees might be the most well-known, [...] butterflies, flies, moths, beetles, and wasps, also pollinate. Birds, bats, other small mammals, and lizards can act as pollinators, as well." Having variety in pollinators is key to a lot of plant reproduction. Certain plants and animals have even co-evolved to have interdependent relationships with one another. This means that certain plants cannot get pollinated without a specific type of pollinator. Unfortunately, many pollinator species are endangered.

So, what can we do to help pollinators and support habitat restoration efforts? You can plant a pollinator garden to attract beneficial insects and pollinators to your garden. You can also set up insect drinking stations, especially during the summer, in shaded areas; These are essentially tiny water bowls for bees to use. You can also take this opportunity to plant flowers that are native to your area. Here in Orange County, it is a good idea to plant the California Poppy, Goodwin Creek Lavender, and Russian Sage. Many native California bees rely of these plants to support themselves. To learn about other plants you can consider adding to your garden, check out this UC Davis article <u>here.</u>

You can take action and advocate against the use of pesticides in our food system. Aside from habitat loss, pesticides and insecticides are one of the biggest reasons bee populations have declined. Despite what many may think, insecticides are indiscriminate, meaning they harm both pests and beneficial insects. There have been various studies that have led to the banning of certain pesticides in countries like Europe, but one agrochemical that persists is neonicotinoids.

This is one of the most widely used pesticides in conventional agriculture despite the various studies showing how harmful the toxin is to pollinators. The majority of our food is dependent on pollination; therefore, it is crucial to protect all species of pollinators.



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Check out the Friends of The Earth webpage <u>here</u> to learn more about how you can get involved in saving the bees. For more information on pollinator-friendly plants, check out <u>this guide</u> from the <u>Theodore Payne Foundation</u>.

Speaking of bees, did you know that CAP OC has a bee colony at our Giving Farm at Westminster High School?

#### About the Giving Farm

The Giving Farm is a farm-to-food bank program that works to promote student and community engagement in the California agricultural industry. The program expects to deliver over 200,000 pounds of produce annually to our OC Food Bank which provides healthy, fresh and local options to the low-income communities we serve. Located at Westminster High School, students and volunteers are provided the unique opportunity to learn about urban agriculture and the connection to local food networks, while also gaining valuable nutrition education.

#### About the Bees

Two teachers from the high school started California's first high school beekeeping program at the Giving Farm in 2022 along with 15 students and support from Jon Poto, the owner of a family-owned raw honey business called Honey Pacifica. Mr. Poto has signed on as a consultant for the class.

We started with 60,000 bees in 5 hives with the project inception in 2022. The hives had not been producing well because of multiple issues, including an ant infestation and aggressive worker bees (they killed each of the Queens that we replaced! and they are harder to work with). Because of these issues, the hives did not produce much honey. Since then, the students, volunteers and beekeeping expert have tried to revitalize the hives 3 times.

At the beginning of this year, they recolonized the hives and added a new Queen Bee. The hives were relocated temporarily to the Seal Beach Wildlife Preserve while the team at the Giving Farm prep the area that they were previously housed. The





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plan is to move the bee hives back to the high school next month. Here is hoping that honey production will be much better this year.

"The most important insect in agriculture is the honeybee," Dave Eusantos, agricultural instructor at Westminster High, shared. "By having the students learn about the lifecycle and the products that you're able to get from the honeybees, it really ties in the different parts of agriculture — the crop production side of it to the specialty products that can be made from the honey that you can get from the bees as well."

#### Did You Know?

Honey has a host of potential health benefits. These include:

- <u>Wound Healing</u>: honey's antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties can help heal wounds and burns. Medical-grade honey can also be used topically to promote healing.
- <u>Antioxidants</u>: honey contains flavonoids and polyphenols, which act as antioxidants to protect cells from damage. These antioxidants may reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes and improve blood sugar regulation.
- <u>Treating infections</u>: honey can help treat infections, including dandruff and seborrheic dermatitis. Manuka honey, a type of raw honey, can kill pathogens that cause food poisoning, wound infections, skin infections, stomach ulcers, and chronic gastritis.
- <u>Gastrointestinal health</u>: honey may help relieve diarrhea and other gastrointestinal conditions and can be used in oral rehydration therapy.
- <u>Neurological health</u>: honey may have antidepressant, anticonvulsant, and antianxiety benefits, and may help prevent memory disorders. A 2022 review suggests that honey may also support memory function and reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome, which can increase the risk of neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease.
- <u>Energy boost</u>: honey is a mixture of glucose and fructose, and eating it can provide a natural energy boost.



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• <u>Exacerbate asthma symptoms</u>: it's believed that the sweetness of honey triggers your salivary glands to produce more saliva. This may lubricate your airways, easing your cough. Honey may also reduce inflammation in the bronchial tubes (airways within the lungs) and help break up mucus that is making it hard for you to breathe. Including honey in one's diet may also help fight allergies that can trigger asthma.

Sources:

- (1) WORLD HONEY BEE DAY | Third Saturday in August
- (2) <u>Support California native bees with these 10 plants</u>
- (3) Small Wonders: The Plight and Promise of California's Native Bees
- (4) How Neonicotinoids Can Kill Bees
- (5) **BEE-FRIENDLY NATIVE PLANTS**
- (6) Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical Research

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How One Bill Impacts Our Entire Food System: The Farm Bill (Page 1 of 2)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC's Climate Corps Fellow.

The Farm Bill is an omnibus, multi-year law that governs an array of agricultural and food programs. It provides an opportunity for policymakers to comprehensively and periodically address agricultural and food issues. In addition to developing and enacting farm legislation, Congress is involved in overseeing its implementation. The farm bill typically is renewed about every five years. Since the 1930s, Congress has enacted 18 farm bills.

- Congressional Research Service

If you have been paying attention to the news this year, you might have heard broadcasters reporting on the Farm Bill. As seen above, the Farm Bill is a bundle of legislation that is passed approximately every five years and covers a range of topics. From crop insurance for farmers to healthy food access for low-income families to beginning farmer training to support for sustainable farming practices, the Farm Bill covers it all. The last bill was passed in 2018, titled the Agriculture Improvement Act, and expired in 2023.

This iteration of the bill has twelve chapters, or titles. They are: Commodities, Conservation, Trade, Nutrition, Credit, Rural Development, Research, Extension, and Related Matters, Forestry, Energy, Horticulture, Crop Insurance, and Miscellaneous.



# How One Bill Impacts Our Entire Food System: The Farm Bill (Page 2 of 2)

### **Title 4: Nutrition**

The Nutrition title is directly responsible for funding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which was formerly known as food stamps. Many Americans rely on SNAP to purchase food. In fact, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), as of 2022, SNAP has helped over 42 million Americans afford a nutritiously adequate diet. Despite the successes SNAP has seen in program implementation, there's still a large number of households who struggle to put food on the table.

Community Action Partnership of Orange County has been working for over 40 years in the county of Orange, providing poverty intervention services. Our agency established the OC Food Bank in the 70s and has been working endlessly to provide food to families and individuals in need. We recognize the stress struggling to afford food creates and how detrimental it can be to individuals health. SNAP is an incredibly beneficial supportive service that is SNAP is one of the most effective tools in reducing hunger and food insecurity in the US. As the Farm Bill expired last year, there have been many attempts to cut SNAP funding by as much as \$30 billion.

The House Agriculture Committee is responsible for voting on a new set of legislation and as food insecurity rises and the cost of living continues to increase, any cuts to SNAP could leave millions of Americans without means to purchase food.

Sources:

- (1) Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?
- (2) What is the Farm Bill?
- (3) <u>With Food Insecurity on the Rise, Proposed Farm Bill Spending Cuts to SNAP Are</u> <u>Dangerous</u>
- (4) How the Farm Bill fights hunger and supports small-scale farmers and producers
- (5) Building on SNAP's Effectiveness in the Farm Bill





The Negative Effects of Air Pollutants In Human Health (Page 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Linda Nguyen, one of CAP OC's Planning Interns. Linda is a Vietnamese American born and raised in Orange County and is passionate about community health. In this blog, she will cover the importance of air monitoring to our health.

Take a moment to consider the air you breathe. Everyday we inhale pollutants coming from vehicle exhaust, smoke, road dust, industrial emissions, pollen, gasfueled yard equipment, chemicals we use in our homes. These can cause short term symptoms like coughing or itch eyes and studies have shown it could lead to lung disease, cancer, or even premature death (Air quality and health | Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2023.). No matter where you live, we are constantly being exposed to air pollution.

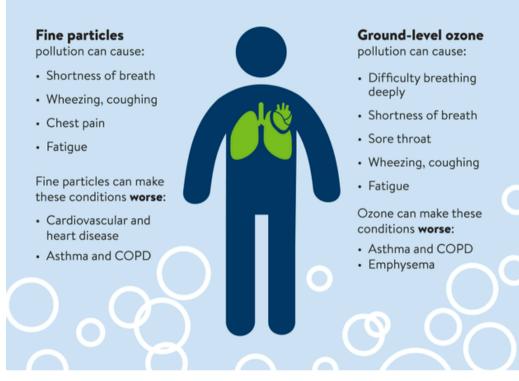
### **Understanding Air Pollutants**

According to the National Weather Service (n.d), the two leading factors that lead to poor air quality are related to elevated concentrations of ground-level ozone or particulate matter. Ground levels of ozone form when nitrogen oxides from vehicle exhaust and industrial emissions react with compounds in the presence of heat. This could cause several health problems including coughing and lung damage. Furthermore, particulate matter in the air includes both solid and liquid participles, like smoke, that are directly emitted or from chemical transformation. The source of this matter is numerous- vehicles, factories, power plants, etc.



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Particle pollution is correlated to health problems including wheezing, impairments in lung function, heart attacks, and even death.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. (2023).

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (2023) claims air pollution is often associated with something outside, but inside air could be equally as dangerous. Americans spend approximately 90% of their time indoors where common indoor pollutants, like radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. Carbon monoxide from furnaces, mold from damp walls, or compounds from a newly painted wall can pollute the air indoors.

#### How We Can Protect Ourselves

It is important that we take measures to protect ourselves from air pollution. The US EPA (2019) suggests the usage of air sensor technology devices such as carbon monoxide monitors and smoke detectors have saved lives and should be in every household. These monitors can provide users a way to identify when to take actions to improve indoor air quality.

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Additionally, as the technology of it evolved, it becomes more inexpensive and more widely available for consumers, including low-cost air pollution monitors.

It is important to mention that low-cost air pollution monitors do not give a complete representation of indoor air quality, but only detect contaminants for which they are designed. As CAP OC continues to expand its capacity to provide Healthy Home Services, we have begun to establish relationships with air monitoring manufacturers to integrate them into our Asthma Remediation Services. To learn more about CAP OC's Asthma Remediation program, contact calaimsupport@capoc.org or call at (714) 839-6199 ext. 6315.

Sources:

- (1) Air quality and health
- (2) Health Impacts of Air Quality
- (3) Low-Cost Air Pollution Monitors and Indoor Air Quality

