



JOURNALISTS' GUIDE

California's journey to quit gas and invest in safer jobs

Why California should retire, replace, and not approve any more gas plants

California has already made bold steps toward a clean energy future, but we must do more to protect working families and prioritize the health and safety of communities of color. California is at a critical turning point where we need to phase out existing gas plants and avoid approving any new gas plants if we want to achieve our climate goals. It's time for a just and orderly transition away from gas entirely, starting with the state's gas plants that are directly located in these same communities who have long been overburdened by pollution.

To safeguard clean air and address climate change, we need a strong commitment to retire all of California gas plants by 2045. Serious concerns about the safety, cost, and reliability of gas show us California must not falter in our progress toward 100 percent clean and renewable energy. Experts say the long-term financial prospects of gas plants are bleak and predict the gas industry will become obsolete,

just like coal. Planning an orderly transition is not only responsible for our public health, but also imperative for a strong economy and sustainable job growth. Despite a vast effort to “greenwash” how the public perceives gas as an energy source, there is nothing “natural” or clean about gas. Gas remains a polluting fossil fuel that poisons our communities and our climate. As we transition toward a clean energy economy, California must prioritize the communities most impacted by the climate crisis.

“I can't see a reason why we should ever build a gas peaker again in the U.S. after, say, 2025. If you think about how energy storage starts to take over the world, peaking is kind of your first big market.”

-Shayle Kann, senior adviser to GTM Research and Wood Mackenzie

Top 5 Reasons Why California Should Replace Gas with Renewables:

1. GAS POISONS OUR AIR

Right now, according to the environmental justice screening tool CalEnviroScreen 3.0, [half of California's polluting gas-fired power plants](#) operate in communities that rank among the state's 25 percent most disadvantaged. These communities tend to consist of low-income people of color. Between fires and smog days, gas plants emit high levels of carbon and other pollutants that cause severe health impacts for the frontline communities who live near them, including asthma, cancer, and other respiratory illnesses. Fracking gas [harms neighboring communities](#), boosting toxic air pollutants and two of the six criteria pollutants — particulate matter and ozone and its precursors.

In 2015, SoCalGas was responsible for the Aliso Canyon disaster, an enormous gas leak in LA County that continued for months as facility operators struggled to reign it in. From Oct. 23, 2015 to Feb. 18, 2016, gas escaped at a rate of 111,000 pounds of methane every hour. The blowout also pumped cancer-causing benzene into the air. Aliso Canyon was the largest recorded gas leak in state history, releasing more carbon emissions than the infamous 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon spill. More than 11,000 Californians, and also schools, were temporarily relocated due to health impacts. This disaster, along with the ongoing risk of future disasters, underscores the health and safety risks of fossil fuels like gas.

2. GAS IS EXPENSIVE COMPARED TO ALTERNATIVES

Together, renewable energy, energy storage, and energy efficiency are cheaper than gas, and they will continue to decline further in cost. Gas is only becoming more costly and risky. Experts say California does not need gas plants to meet the state's energy needs and that [at least one-quarter](#) of the current plants could be retired immediately. Currently, California could [still reliably meet its energy needs](#) if 28 natural gas plants in the CAISO territory were taken offline. Twelve of these plants are situated in neighborhoods that disproportionately bear the brunt of air pollution.

“Gas peakers only operate a few hours in a year. We've seen four to six hours of energy storage is technically sufficient to replace most of these peaking assets. As battery costs continue to fall, battery storage systems have become economically more attractive alternatives.” **-Ravi Manghani, Wood Mackenzie Power and Renewables**

3. GAS IS RISKY AND UNRELIABLE

Gas is a flammable product that causes explosions and makes California families sick. In 2010, a gas pipeline ruptured in San Bruno in the San Francisco Bay Area, incinerating a neighborhood and killing eight people, including children, and harming dozens. It is also a finite resource, in contrast to the state's diverse mix of clean, renewable energy sources, which includes wind, geothermal, solar, battery storage, and other clean technologies. Gas does not bode well for a resilient future. When disaster strikes, gas plants can easily go offline, causing blackouts. Glendale, despite being home to one of the dirtiest plants in the state, the massive Grayson gas power plant, still suffered summer blackouts, highlighting how gas often falls short in delivering a reliable power grid.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT CALIFORNIA GAS

- As of 2018, California had [almost 200 utility-scale, gas-fired power plants](#) in operation
- Collectively, these plants generate around 39 gigawatts of generation capacity for the state's power grid
- Most of these facilities are either “peaker” plants or combined cycle gas turbine plants
- Peaker plants kick into gear when electricity demand spikes, only for a few hours at a time
- Peakers are less efficient (more polluting), and are located near densely populated urban areas
- In 2017, [gas accounted for 33 percent](#) of California's overall energy mix

4. PHASING OUT GAS PLANTS ALIGNS WITH STATE LAWS AND POLICIES

SB 100, the landmark bill signed into law by Gov. Brown in 2018, commits California to completely phase out fossil fuels by 2045. Gas stands in the way of California meeting this goal.

California cities have now begun phasing out the use of gas appliances in new housing, with cities like San Luis Obispo, Menlo Park, and Berkeley leading the way. Other cities in California — and nationwide — are now considering following suit.

Gov. Newsom's FY19-20 budget included [\\$165 million in funding over five years](#) for California's Workforce Development Board for targeted career apprenticeship programs and "high-road" training partnership programs with a focus in areas like Kern County to help fossil fuel workers transition to clean economy careers.

Labor partners are eager to make these programs successful, and we need to adequately fund these programs to meet the scale of our climate crisis.

Alternatives to gas plants — such as [8minute's Eland massive solar-battery project](#) to be built in eastern Kern County, employing union labor, that will supply dispatchable power as Los Angeles retires its gas power plant fleet — represent examples of projects that are better for communities economically and environmentally, delivering high-paying jobs in industries that are flourishing, not fading.

"Renewables and demand response and batteries are about to do to gas what gas has done to coal."

-Mark Dyson, Rocky Mountain Institute

5. CALIFORNIA IS ALREADY TURNING AWAY FROM GAS IN FAVOR OF CLEAN ENERGY

In 2018, PG&E [decided to swap out](#) three gas-fired plants in Yuba City, Feather River, and Metcalf for four energy storage projects in Monterey County.

In 2019, SoCal Edison moved toward replacing the Puente gas peaker plant in Oxnard with battery storage solutions.

In 2019, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti declared, "[This is the beginning of the end of natural gas](#)," turning away from an opportunity to rebuild three coastal gas generating plants — the Harbor, Scattergood, and Haynes plants -- and committing to [beef up renewable energy](#) in their place.

In 2019, GE [opted to close a gas plant](#) 20 years prematurely, deeming it "uneconomical" due to more cost-effective renewable energy options.

In 2019, Glendale, after significant community opposition for years, opted for clean energy instead of a new power plant at Grayson.

SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE

Experts are available to speak to the unreliability, safety concerns, and health impacts of gas.



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