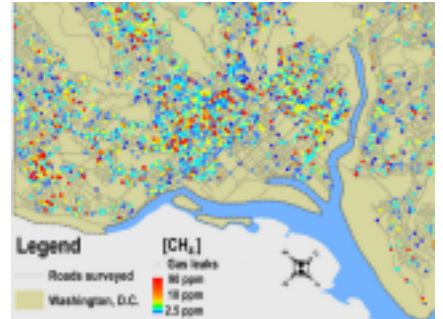


END GAS LEAKS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY



HELP BUILD MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S GAS LEAK MAP



350MoCo is walking County neighborhoods to map the many, many gas leaks coming from Washington Gas and BG&E infrastructure.. This grassroots, community science effort will build a map of all the gas leaks around us, to use as a tool for raising Montgomery County residents' awareness of the dangers from this escaping gas. And, it's a tool for fighting back against the gas utilities that keep pushing for more gas infrastructure and money at the County and State levels.



We found 78 methane leaks in downtown Silver Spring

We recently finished our methane detection project in the downtown Silver Spring area. We found 78 leaks, including two near the Silver Spring Metro station that were over the limit for an explosion danger. These leaks are dangerous for our safety, for our health, and for our climate - and they are often literally right under our feet.

Why Worry About Gas Leaks?

Safety

Montgomery County has had more than its fair share of gas explosions in apartments over just the past few years. Seven people, including two children, perished during a fiery explosion at the Flower Branch Apartments in the Long Branch neighborhood of Silver Spring on Aug. 10, 2016. On November 17, 2022, a condo building exploded and caught fire in Gaithersburg, injuring 12 people, including four children. These explosions didn't have to happen. We need to have our homes and all buildings electric powered as soon as possible.

Health

Did you know that gas appliances are also a threat to your health, even without leaks? Like any fossil fuel, methane emits noxious fumes when burned. The resulting mix of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and other pollutants have serious health ramifications.

Nitrogen dioxide exposure results in increased respiratory symptoms, asthma attacks and hospital admissions. Long-term NO₂ exposure is likely to cause asthma, especially in children, and can increase the risk of diabetes, cancer, and premature death.

Many homes with gas-burning appliances frequently exceed Environmental Protection Agency outdoor air quality standards, but because indoor air is unregulated by the EPA, the toxic fumes are perfectly legal.

Climate

Methane from Washington Gas and BG&E is burned and leaked all across Montgomery County. It accounts for about 20% of our region's greenhouse gas emissions, according to official estimates, but the real numbers are likely far higher.

When methane burns, it produces carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas. But when released directly into the atmosphere, methane is 84 times more powerful as a global warming agent than carbon dioxide, making gas leaks a serious threat to the climate. Research shows methane leaks from gas utilities, including Washington Gas, are likely double the official estimates.

But, there's serious methane leakage before the gas even gets to our utility. Those emissions – from fracking the gas, processing and transporting it – are 60% higher than EPA estimates, according to a study published in the journal Science. Our County climate goals – cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035 – will never be met if we keep burning gas.

So What's The Solution?

Moving away from gas to heat our buildings, and instead using high efficiency, electric driven heat pumps, which produce zero emissions and are three to six times more efficient than gas. Electric stoves and heat pump water heaters are also key pieces of the puzzle.



But gas companies are working to block this transition at the County and the State level. The 350MoCo gas leak map will provide an important tool to show County residents the risks of continuing to burn gas.

Would you like us to help you map your community's methane leaks?

350MoCo is working with ally groups including Beyond Gas, DC; Action in Montgomery and Interfaith Power and Light to make sure that our County sees the climate, public health, and money-saving benefits of transitioning to clean and healthy energy in our buildings. We want to help people all over the County to become community scientists and map their own schools, stores, and houses of worship for methane leaks. If you are interested just speak with us or sign up at our table! You can also reach us via email at 350moco@gmail.com