

FACTS: GAS LEAF BLOWERS

Many landscape maintenance service providers continue to use two-stroke gas-powered leaf blowers (GLBs) that the rest of the world is increasingly moving away from. These leaf blowers generate toxic, carcinogenic air pollution around our neighborhoods, schools, and public spaces, and noise that far exceeds health and safety standards. These practices come with high costs for our health, environment, and our enjoyment of our homes and communities. Legislation to restrict the use of this one tool has been enacted in more than 200 US communities, 4 counties, and 1 state.



High levels of harmful pollution: Two-stroke GLBs are much more polluting than cars. They burn an oil-gas mixture that generates high levels of ozone-forming and cancer-causing chemicals, including fine particulate matter (“PM2.5”) [1]. These invisible pollutants are inhaled by equipment operators and passers-by and have health effects ranging from heart and lung disease to stroke, cancer, and premature death.

- An authoritative, independent laboratory study showed that operating a two-stroke GLB for 30 minutes emits pollutants equal to those generated by driving a Ford F-150 truck 3,900 miles, as far as from Texas to Alaska [2].
- Another independent investigation showed concentrations of ultrafine particles (the most hazardous form of PM2.5) from commercial GLBs to be up to 54 times higher than a busy highway intersection in Los Angeles [3].
- The California Air Resources Board equates pollution from an hour of leaf blower use to 1,100 miles driven in a 2016 Toyota Camry [4].

Ozone and fine PM are well known causes / contributors to early death, heart attack, stroke, congestive heart failure, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, [5-7] and possibly other serious health conditions, including autism [8]. Even short-term exposure can be harmful. Workers, children, seniors, and people with chronic illness, are at greatest risk.

Noise harmful to hearing and health: Noise from popular models of commercial gas leaf blowers exceeds 100 decibels at point of operation [9-10] and carries over long distances, affecting entire neighborhoods [11]. These levels are orders of magnitude higher than safe standards for workers and the public [12] with health effects ranging from hearing loss to heart disease and psychological and cognitive disturbances [12-15].

Fuel spillage, waste, and contamination of soil and aquifers: Every year gas leaf blowers and other lawn and garden equipment consume 1.6 billion gallons of gasoline [16], generate tens of millions of tons of carbon dioxide, spill millions of gallons of gasoline into the ground and storm drains [17], and add millions of pounds of toxic and non-recyclable waste to our landfills [18].

References

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