



Asthma Coalition of Long Island

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Re: Public health rationale for moderating gasoline leaf blower use

To the Members of the Huntington Town Board:

The Asthma Coalition of Long Island/American Lung Association of the Northeast supports the efforts to amend the town code in the Township of Huntington to modify the use of Gasoline Leaf Blowers (GLBs). This action would improve the health of the public - particularly children and the elderly - and reduce pollution of our environment. Other communities in New York and elsewhere have implemented restrictions on gasoline leaf blowers without any serious economic or other consequences. Other major organizations concerned with health and the environment also support such modification. Gasoline leaf blowers pose many hazards to health and the environment, including the following:

- **Airborne pollutants.** Large volumes of particulates are stirred up which stay in the air for days. These include carcinogens and other dangerous contaminants. GLBs release clouds of dust that may also contain heavy metals, mold and fungus spores, weed seeds, insect eggs, and rodent feces, especially when used in the summer months when few leaves are on the ground. These provoke allergies and asthma, cardiovascular conditions, and contribute to lung disease.
- Each time a leaf blower is refueled, toxic fumes (Volatile Organic Compounds, or VOCs) may be released into the air. Spilling and overfilling equipment will also result in the release of VOCs, which react with sunlight to cause ground-level ozone (smog). Ozone affects the lungs and many other organs. Children, the elderly, and people with chronic illness are the most susceptible. Long Island's air quality has rated "F" for the past 14 years, and GLBs contribute to the problem.
- **Ground and water pollution.** Gasoline spilled on lawns can seep into the groundwater and waterways, affecting drinking water and polluting rivers, lakes, and oceans. Toxins and other materials swept into streets clog storm drains and may also end up in our waterways.
- **Harm to soil, landscapes and small animals.** GLBs damages top soil, harms tender landscape plants, and disturbs the habitats of small animals and insects
- **Noise pollution.** Gasoline powered leaf blowers create noise levels of 90-100 decibels at close range, and exceed the EPA's recommended maximum noise level even at 50 feet. Excess noise produces an increase in blood pressure, adrenaline, heart rate and stress; it also damages hearing. Landscape workers, who rarely use protective devices, are particularly at risk.

For these public health reasons, we concur with the many other health and environmental organizations which support efforts to restrict the use of gasoline leaf blowers.

Sincerely,

Anne Little, MPH, AE-C
Director, Asthma Coalition of Long Island