FAMILY BUDGETS, HOME HEATING AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT OF NATURAL GAS

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Natural gas can’t be beat when it comes to its superior performance in heating a home, especially when compared to heat pumps and other appliances that rely solely on electricity.

Natural gas-powered appliances are both more cost-effective and environmentally friendly for homeowners when compared to their all-electric counterparts, according to consumer studies and government reports.

So, why are some groups campaigning to ban homeowners from using natural gas in favor of these more expensive alternatives? Already, a number of cities in California, along with a town in Massachusetts, have enacted new building codes that ban the use of natural gas in new homes and apartment buildings.

But let’s look at the facts, which support the use of natural gas over their claims.

As Consumer Affairs reports:

"Gas takes the trophy as the more eco-friendly option for any appliance. Gas dryers in particular use 30 percent less energy than electric ones, which will reduce your carbon footprint. That's something to feel good about!"

An economic report issued last spring by the U.S. Commerce Department’s National Institute of Standards and Technology also called natural gas the most “eco-friendly” choice for home energy use.

But there are also the cost benefits of using natural gas compared to all-electric appliances.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) says cost is the biggest limitation of going all-electric, compared to natural gas, especially when it comes to heating a home in winter.

"The high cost of electric heating in colder climates has often limited the use of heat pumps and other electric equipment in those areas …"

Although the EIA does show all-electric heating has grown in the last decade, that trend has exclusively been represented in the South. According to the 2015 EIA’s Residential Energy Consumption Survey, 13.4 million households used heat pumps to heat their homes. Of that total, 70% of the households are located in the South region.

Case in point, all-electric heat pumps make the most sense where they are used infrequently -- where it’s relatively warm year-round -- or in combination with another fuel source. EIA found that natural gas furnaces are the most common heating equipment used in every climate except the hot-humid region of the Southeast.

Across the country, 47% of homes rely on natural gas as their primary heating fuel, compared to the 36% that rely on electricity, according to EIA.
The EIA nationwide survey also found that Americans enjoy 150 unique combinations of heating equipment and fuels. So, why would going all-electric make sense for the entire nation?

EIA explains that heating and appliance choices are diverse, varying by climate and region. This makes a one-size-fits-all approach to home-energy use both untenable for family budgets, and unwise for the environment.

Environmental groups who want a society powered entirely by solar and wind should recognize that natural gas is a partner, and part of the solution to reduce carbon dioxide emissions together with renewables.

In fact, natural gas is used to complement electricity generation when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing.

It is no wonder that both natural gas use and renewable energy are projected to grow in 2020 and the foreseeable future.

We in the natural gas and oil industry believe the solution to climate change can be had without sacrificing the economic and environmental gains that have come from affordable, reliable, and abundant natural gas.

About The Author

John Siciliano is a writer for API Global Industry Services' Marketing and Communications Department. He joined API after 14 years as an energy and environment reporter and editor. Most recently, he was senior energy and environment writer for the Washington Examiner and the Daily on Energy newsletter. He began full-time reporting in Washington in 2001 as a foreign affairs correspondent, also covering national security and defense. His coverage of the Mideast and Saudi Arabia led him to become a full-time energy reporter. He earned a bachelors degree in psychology from Ohio Northern University, and he also holds a Masters of Science degree in education from the Franciscan University of Steubenville.

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