

# Op-Ed: Freedom From a World With Natural Gas

By Allan Montpellier, PE, Principal and Chief Innovation Officer

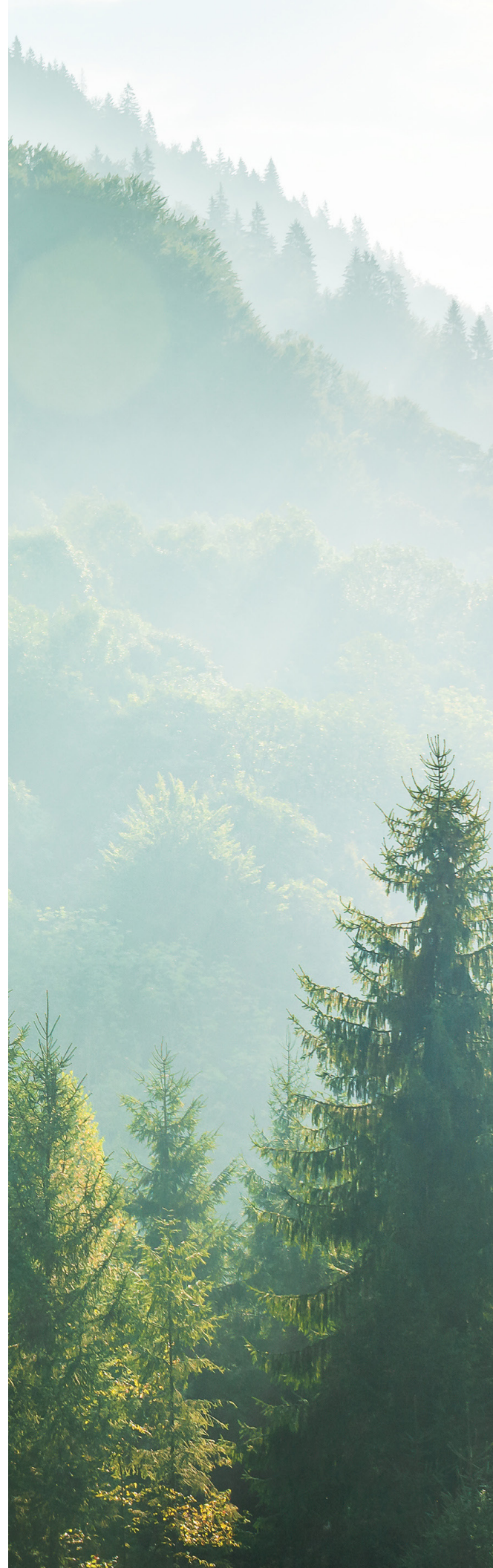
DON'T BE AFRAID! Sounds like good advice for watching a horror movie. Here, it refers to a future without natural gas, which does not need to be scary. Certainly, not as scary as Hannibal Lecter. Why should we all prefer a world without natural gas? Quite simply – FREEDOM! Freedom to be healthy and safe. Freedom from disastrous environmental changes. Freedom from outrageous cost increases. The United States was founded on freedom, so why would we not continue to reinforce this pillar of our society?

We are witnessing the negative environmental impact of burning fossil fuels, including natural gas, more each year and we are running out of time to fix the problem. While we are becoming familiar with the shift to electric vehicles, you may not have considered how fossil fuels are built into our homes. Moreso, the health impacts and risks of burning natural gas in our homes are less known.

- Gas cooktops release methane and other pollutants through leaks and incomplete combustion, which have long-term negative health impacts.
- Flue gas leaks from furnaces or boilers can cause carbon monoxide poisoning and even death.
- Gas line explosions, causing injury and death. Risks will increase over time with aging infrastructure.

Some will claim recent increases in U.S. oil and gas production resulting in “energy independence” protects us from the volatility of oil and gas prices. Here is the reality:

- Oil and gas are internationally traded commodities, and “energy independence” does not isolate us from price fluctuations in the world market. Wars, embargos, or any one of the many bad actors on the world stage, like Putin, can drive up the cost of oil and gas.
- Our economic freedom from global oil and gas pricing can only be achieved if we stop consuming oil and gas in large quantities and switch to electricity. Why? Because locally harvested wind and solar power are isolated from world cost pressures.







A common argument against electrification is that it costs more money and negatively impacts the poorest people in our community.

In reality, we are all paying more right now due to increased insurance costs to cover the escalating damage from more frequent and larger storms, wildfires, and flooding due to climate change. These natural disasters also have a greater impact on the most disadvantaged people in our communities.

History also tells us we will see the prices of home heat pumps and induction cooktops drop dramatically as production increases. Think of how expensive flat panel televisions were when they came out in the late 1990s compared to today.

The good news is there are great alternatives for everything we use gas for now, making the choice to shift to all-electric homes even easier. Here are several options to consider:

- Home and hot water heating – electric heat pumps
- Cooking – induction cooktops
- Fireplaces – electric
- BBQs – wood pellets or charcoal
- Generators – batteries

We will be rewarded with increased health and safety, environmental sustainability, and economic resilience if we start converting to all-electric solutions now. The recent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act will help, but as citizens of this great nation, we need to act at the individual level.

So, let's encourage our state and local governments to change building codes to eliminate the use of natural gas in new homes, incentivize all-electric conversion options, and each commit to all-electric.

Resources:

- 1) *Climate and health impacts of natural gas stoves*
- 2) *Silent Threat: Gas explosions nationwide since 2010*
- 3) *Is The U.S. Energy Independent?*
- 4) *The IPCC Climate Change 2022 Impacts Report: Why it matters*
- 5) *The Rising Cost of Natural Disaster Insurance*
- 6) *Heat Pump Systems | DOE*