Bay Area Air District

Myths vs. Facts: Understanding the Bay Area's Building Appliance Rules

MYTH #1

The rules ban all gas appliances, including stoves.

FACT: The Bay Area Air District's appliance rules require new water heaters and furnaces to meet air pollution standards. The rules apply only to the sale and installation of new water heaters and furnaces that would take place after the specified compliance dates. Stoves, ovens, dryers, and other cooking appliances are not affected because they account for less than 10% of outdoor air pollution from appliances. The Air District has no plan to regulate these devices.

MYTH #2

Homeowners must replace their gas appliances before 2027 or risk going without hot water or heat for months or more.

FACT: The rules apply **only when** a water heater or furnace is **replaced proactively** or **fails and requires replacement after** the following specified compliance dates, which start at the beginning of each year:

2027*: Tank type 75k BTU/hr water heaters, typically small residential water heaters
2029: Furnaces less than 175k BTU/hr
2031: Tank type 75k to 2M BTU/hr and Tankless water heaters, typically large commercial and multifamily water heaters

In general, there is no requirement to proactively replace working appliances before they break down and need replacement.

MYTH #3

Homeowners must replace their existing gas appliances immediately.

FACT: There is no mandate to remove or replace functioning appliances before they fail. The rules apply only to appliances **newly purchased** or installed after the specified compliance dates.

MYTH #4

These rules were rushed through without public input.

FACT: The 2020-2023 rulemaking process were partial amendments to existing rules and included extensive public engagement, with over **10 public meetings** and 565 public comments on the final rule package. Additional stakeholder engagement and over **20 meetings** were held through the 2023-2024 Implementation Working Group process, leading to board updates and likely future amendments of Rule 9-6 for small water heaters to provide more flexibility.

MYTH #5

The Air District has not done any outreach to inform the public about these rules.

FACT: The Air District has begun the first phase of outreach focusing on contractor engagement and education. The Board of Directors approved funding for a substantial public outreach and awareness campaign which will begin closer to the compliance dates to ensure information is timely and actionable for Bay Area residents.

MYTH #6

People could go for months without hot water.

FACT: Most property owners will be able to install a heat pump water heater quickly working with contractors that are readily available today. The Air District's research shows there is sufficient workforce capacity to meet this demand. For a smaller number of situations where electrical changes are needed, the Air District is currently developing amendments to the water heater rule (Rule 9-6) to allow flexibility to ensure residents are not left without hot water during the transition which is expected to be considered by the Board in the fall of 2026.

MYTH #7

It will be very expensive to redo a property's electrical system to comply with this rule.

FACT: In most cases, heat pump water heaters can replace gas water heaters with only light electrical work, and many newer models can simply plug into a standard 120-volt outlet. With new technology solutions, many 240-volt models work on current electrical service and panel—no upgrade needed.

*The Board of Directors will consider flexibility amendments in 2026 and potentially adjust the timeline with a later compliance deadline.

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In limited cases, electrical upgrades may be costly or time consuming. To address this, the Air District is currently developing 2026 amendments to the water heater rule (Rule 9-6) to allow flexibility to ensure residents are not left without hot water during the transition. Staff expect the Board of Directors to consider these amendments in the fall.

MYTH #8

The rules will have minimal impact on air quality.

FACT: Gas appliances emit significant amounts of nitrogen oxides (NOx), which contribute to smog and respiratory illnesses. The new standards are projected to prevent approximately 85 premature deaths and 15,000 asthma attacks annually in the Bay Area, avoiding up to $890 million per year in health-related costs.

MYTH #9

Electric appliances are unaffordable and impractical.

FACT: While some electric appliances do cost more upfront, many utility, state and local programs offer significant financial support.

- Visit the SwitchIsOn.org to learn more about incentives and financing in your city.
- Modern electric appliances, such as heat pump water heaters, are efficient, reliable, and can lower energy costs with the right electric rate. Heat pumps also have the advantage that they can provide air conditioning on hot days.

MYTH #10

There is a set maximum cost that homeowners will have to pay to comply with these rules.

FACT: There is no set cost for homeowners to comply with these rules and actual installation costs will vary. A 2024 staff report to the Air District Board of Directors – based on thousands of Bay Area installations – found average additional costs are less than $2,000 for zero NOx water heaters, though some may be higher. Staff is currently developing amendments to the water heater rule (Rule 9-6) to allow flexibility for higher cost installations, which is expected to be considered by the Board in the fall of 2026. A cost and technology assessment for furnaces (Rule 9-4) will be completed before the 2029 compliance date.

MYTH #11

The rules disproportionately affect low-income and disadvantaged communities.

FACT: The resulting air quality improvement benefits from the rules were found to be particularly strong in communities of color in the Bay Area that already suffer disproportionate pollution burdens. Additionally, the Air District is currently developing amendments to the water heater rule (9-6) that may include provisions or exemptions for low-income households.

MYTH #12

The Bay Area is the only region with such rules.

FACT: The Bay Area is among the first to adopt these standards, but similar policies are being considered across California. The California Air Resources Board is developing similar rulemaking that, if passed, would cover the entire state.

For more information on the Bay Area's building appliance rules, visit: baaqmd.gov/building-appliances

You can also sign up for email information regarding these rules at the bottom of the page.