

No rate increase for gas

The Oregon Public Utilities Commission is considering a Northwest Natural Gas application for an 18% rate increase to take effect Nov. 1. The gas company is promising to decarbonize its gas grid through biomethane, hydrogen and synthetic methane. But the facts are that biomethane is a temporary and limited solution, hydrogen is dangerous and costly, and carbon-neutral synthetic methane is a pipe dream.

Multiple international agencies have identified several core strategies as the most cost-effective way to decarbonize. These include generating electricity from clean renewable sources, powering transportation with electricity rather than fossil fuels, using electricity for heating buildings and for manufacturing, and developing carbon-free fuels for when electrification isn't practical or when long-term storage is necessary.

We should be discussing how we can gracefully age out of our existing gas infrastructure in a way that maintains the viability of the public utility and affordability for its remaining gas customers. Instead, we have to resist the gas company's efforts to sell false promises while asking for an unjustified rate increase.

NW Natural is not acting in the public interest and does not deserve an increase in its profit margins. It also makes no sense to continue subsidies to any fossil fuel infrastructure, and we should not incentivize new buildings to connect to the gas system.

The Oregon Public Utilities Commission should not allow any portion of this rate request.

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