



Everyone deserves clean air, including the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)

What are Waste Anesthetic Gases (WAGs)? Anesthetic gases are given to patients during procedures or surgeries. In the operating room these gases are controlled through closed systems and exhausted off the hospital's roof. Anesthetic gases that escape through leaks in these systems are waste anesthetic gases (WAGs). Patients enter the PACUs with lungs full of these gases exhaling them 95% unmetabolized into an environment without any controls or regulatory requirements.

Dangers of WAGs

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) protects workers and recognizes WAGs' negative health impacts including headaches, fatigue, miscarriages, renal & liver disease, and malignancies. [Anesthetic Gases: Guidelines for Workplace Exposures | Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(osha.gov\)](https://www.osha.gov/publications/Anesthetic-Gases-Guidelines-for-Workplace-Exposures)

ASPAN's Clean Air Campaign

Join ASPAN's recognition of this work hazard and movement to control WAGs in PACUs through:

- Recognition of this occupational hazard
- Implementing engineering controls to remove WAGs (ie increased fresh air exchanges and scavenging masks)
- Regular surveillance of air quality during high use

For education and resources on this campaign, please visit: <https://www.aspan.org/Publications-Resources/White-Papers>



- Anesthetic Gases are **green house gases** (lasting between 1 and 114 years), and some deplete the ozone
- Anesthetic gases are **not metabolized** by patients awakening from surgery. These gases are exhaled 95% unmetabolized into nurses' breathing zone.

