‘This advice is absurd’
Issues with providing generic advice on community protection from chronic volcanic degassing
Communities downwind were exposed to potentially harmful SO$_2$ gas and sulfate aerosol.

Why do a study about vog protection?

• It’s a part of life in Hawai`i island

• Several agencies offer advice … not all the same …

… but what do people actually do to protect themselves?

• Are people aware of existing advice? What do they think of it?

• How would people like to be kept informed?

Survey locations

• 3 community focus groups
• 1 agency focus group
• 146 questionnaire surveys
Experiencing vog

82% believe they have health symptoms due to the vog (96% in the 40-59 age category)!

- 41% - symptoms have got worse with time
- 78% - think vog is damaging to long term health

Perceived symptoms due to vog (% of people)
Actions when it is voggy
(as recommended by official advice)

- Drink water
- Close windows/doors
- Go/stay indoors
- Stop/limit physical activity
- Check for warnings/advice
- Do nothing
- Take medication
- Turn on air purifier
- Turn on dehumidifier
- Relocate
- Turn on Air Con
- Use respiratory protection
- Contact a doctor

53% do not take any action when it is voggy

Other things that people do when it is voggy
(not part of official advice)

- Hot drinks relieve phlegm
- Skin washing stops stinging
- Relaxing exercise
- Vegetation may absorb vog so being in forested areas may help

Examples of products used to reduce vog symptoms
(no product endorsement!)
Why don’t people take action?

• the vog does not affect them

• the recommended actions are irrelevant due to type of home or lifestyle … ‘the advice is absurd’

• unaware of appropriate protective actions

People at higher elevation are more likely to think that their home can be sealed from vog as have better quality housing.

http://www.realtor.com
Study outcomes:

• New interagency group formed and rewrote all guidance.

• Same advice now used across all agencies.

• Advice made into printable products with varying levels of information. (click on images to go to products)

• New interagency ‘Vog Dashboard’ portal – one-stop shop for all vog info. Used extensively by public & media during the 2018 eruption crisis – 50,000 visits per day at peak.