

Vic Bondi



# What's Worse: Vog or Smog? - Earth911.com

revised July 6, 2018

Friday, July 6 2018, 10:28 AM

---

## What's Worse: Vog or Smog?

 Gemma Alexander  July 6, 2018



**1** SHARES |  1 |  0 |  0 |  0 |  0 |  0 |  0

With the Kilauea eruption in the news, some people feel compelled to resurrect the argument that volcanic emissions dwarf human pollution. In view of spectacular demonstrations of nature's power, it's a tempting idea. Orders of magnitude separate human-caused from volcanic contributions of greenhouse gases and humans are the primary culprits.

## Kilauea

Yes, volcanic eruptions are dangerous. Kilauea, on the Big Island of Hawaii, has technically been erupting continuously since 1983. But on May 3, 2018, the eruption took a dramatic turn when the volcano began spewing lava into residential subdivisions. In the weeks since then, Kilauea has introduced the wider world to a variety of health hazards, including vog, laze, and Pele's hair.

## Volcanic Health Risks

The golden strands of volcanic glass evocatively called Pele's hair are beautiful. But they can inflame lungs if inhaled and damage the esophagus when ingested in contaminated water. Laze used to be what people did on a Hawaiian vacation, but now laze refers to lava haze, the dense toxic clouds that form along the shoreline when lava contacts ocean water.

The most dangerous air pollutant produced by Kilauea is vog. Volcanic fog can be invisible or form a smog-like haze. It contains carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, hydrogen fluoride, and carbon monoxide. Vog is similar to smog — the pollution produced by coal power plants and vehicle emissions. People exposed to vog