

'It's being abused': People, businesses react to bill banning retail sale of nitrous oxide

By [Maddie Kerth](#)

Published: May. 15, 2024 at 5:34 PM CDT

NEW ORLEANS (WVUE) - Louisiana representatives and senators unanimously agree the sale of nitrous oxide to the public should be illegal.

A bill that would ban retail sales, increase fines and penalties, and allow the ATC to investigate bad actors [sailed through the Louisiana Senate](#) and moves to the governor's desk for final approval.

Walking Uptown, along Broadway, nitrous canisters littered on the sidewalk. The single-serving hits and the larger flavored tanks can be bought at vape shops and gas stations across New Orleans.

Many we spoke to agreed with lawmakers.

"I think it's obvious it should be banned," said one resident.

"Yes, I definitely agree," said another. "Banning that would be a good thing."

"People don't realize the dangers of it," said public health educator Dr. Eric Griggs.

Griggs says the lasting effects of inhaling nitrous oxide can be permanent or even fatal.

"It actually displaces oxygen off of the lungs and you can actually suffocate and not even realize it," said Dr. Griggs.

It's also known as laughing gas, commonly used at the dentist, and the small canisters can make whipped cream in restaurants.

Lawmakers say there shouldn't be retail access because of how easily the gas can be abused.

"The unsuspecting public, they don't know that. And there are just people selling that on the street thinking they can get a little recreational high," State Rep. Joe Stagni (R-Kenner), who authored the bill after watching [a series of Fox 8 reports](#).

"Hopefully, we can save some lives and make people aware that this is a bad, bad item that we got to prevent from being sold on the streets," said State Sen. Patrick Connick (R-Jefferson), who carried the bill in the Senate.

"In college, they had 'Whip-it parties,' and it was fun, and everybody was laughing. But it activates the limbic system, hits your dopamine," said Dr. Griggs. "So, you feel like you have to have it like any other drug. And there can be sad, sad, stories of people that have been affected."

People like Ashley Broha, who found her soon-to-be husband dead in their Baton Rouge home.

"Found a book sack full of masks. The tank. The connection to the tank. And he was hooked up to nitrous and no oxygen," said Broha.

When asked if the gas seemed like it could be dangerous to kids, one resident said, "Absolutely. It obviously is. It's being abused."

Several gas stations and vape shops around town talked to Fox 8 about their sales off-camera, saying they wanted to wait for the bill to become law before commenting. Many said if the governor signs the bill, they plan to pull the product and try to return it to their wholesaler.

<https://www.fox8live.com/2024/05/15/its-being-abused-people-businesses-react-bill-banning-retail-sale-nitrous-oxide/>