



HOW THE WOOD PELLET INDUSTRY IMPACTS HUMAN HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

“Beating and humming all through the night... didn’t know you could rob people from their sleep.” – Wanda King



Over the last few years, the Southern US has seen a dramatic increase in wood pellet production. From Virginia to Arkansas and everywhere in between, facilities have sprung up that are dramatically impacting forests. One of the least discussed impacts of this industry are those on the health of the people living near these facilities and on the well-being of their communities. Here we will outline some of those impacts.

Impacts on Local Communities



Wood pellet facilities can potentially reduce property values and appreciation rates [1]



Increased traffic to supply the mill and transport the pellets to export terminals clog up and damage local roads with logging trucks and semis [2]



Production of pellets generates explosive and flammable dust, creating a fire hazard for the surrounding community [3]



“I can’t even stand to be out on the back deck... my allergies are so flared up.” -- Kayla Walker, Baton Rouge, LA



“A lot of dust... a lot of noise at night.” -- Carl Scott, Garysburg, NC



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Impacts On Human Health



Wood pellet facilities produce noise pollution, often 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, causing sleep disruption and decreasing the quality of life for longtime residents [4]



Manufacturing wood pellets releases pollutants and particulates that irritate the cardiovascular system, increasing emergency room visits for vulnerable citizens [5]



The American Heart Association stated that “Short-term exposure to small particulate matter can trigger cardiovascular-disease mortality and illness; long term exposure reduces life expectancy up to a few years.” [6]



“When you sit down by the port and watch Enviva unload its wood pellets, you notice wood dust flying everywhere. It gets in your nose, it gets in your eyes, it makes you start coughing. It’s not safe to breathe.” -- Henry Lawrence, activist, Panama City, FL.

References

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