Episode 9 EPA PM 2.5 Hearings Planned

On June 17, 2022, The Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.) announced its plans to reconsider the 12 microgram PM 2.5 particulate pollution standard, which could bring down the PM 2.5 minimum emissions considered safe down to 8 micrograms, closer to the World Health Organization PM 2.5 standard of 5 micrograms.

Lowering the PM 2.5 standard below 12 micrograms would be beneficial, in Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates' (RAWSEP's) view. RAWSEP members plan on testifying on the wood smoke emission particulates health effects of PM 2.5 at EPA hearings on lowering the PM 2.5 Standards. Lowering the minimum considered safe would make wood smoke pollution more closely regulated, and lead to more enforcement of regulations against residential wood burning, since 90% of the emissions from wood burning are PM 2.5.

PM 2.5 is particulate matter 2.5 microns in size, the perfect size to infiltrate the human lung, leading to a cascade of human health problems. Residents who live near wood burners are exposed to emissions of PM 2.5, which infiltrates neighbors' yards and even infiltrates neighbors' homes, requiring continuous use of air purifiers in the homes of near neighbors of wood burners.

The same article by NBC news which announced these planned EPA hearings on lowering PM 2.5 standards also stated that if there was a reduction to 8 micrograms in the U.S., it would save 19,000 lives per year, and also alleviate many of the disproportionate health burdens felt by communities of color. Two recent reports found that because of residential redlining, U.S. citizens of color over age 65 suffered more health effects from air pollution than U.S. white citizens over age 65. Wood smoke emissions are hyper-localized and are best detected by hyper-localized PM 2.5 monitors. RAWSEP members use resident-owned PurpleAir PM 2.5 monitors whose data is put on EPA maps. The reason given for the EPA hearings on lowering the PM 2.5 standard was because "available scientific evidence and technical information indicate that the current standards may not be adequate to protect public health and welfare."