

Episode 56GG July 19, 2023. A table top exercise, and an emissions lawsuit in Puerto Rico invoking RICO violations.

What is a tabletop exercise?

A tabletop exercise can be used as a meeting to discuss a simulated emergency situation. Members of an organization or municipality meet and discuss the actions they would take in a particular emergency, testing their emergency plan in an informal, low-stress environment. Tabletop exercises are used to clarify roles and responsibilities and to identify additional organization or municipality mitigation and preparedness needs. The exercise should result in action plans for continued improvement of the emergency plan.

A tabletop exercise (TTX) is a facilitated discussion of a scripted scenario in an informal, stress-free environment that is based on current applicable policies, plans, and procedures. The TTX design process facilitates conceptual understanding, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and/or achieves changes in policies and procedures.

What would a tabletop exercise to stop indoor wood burning pollution in your neighborhood or municipality be like? Is pollution at emergency levels, or do we have time to plan to avert harm from the PM2.5 pollution of indoor residential wood burning in our neighborhoods and municipalities, causing human health problems and early deaths and contributing to hastening climate change causing an overheated planet and wildfires around the whole world?

Puerto Rico

The New York Times

July 19, 2023

[https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/19/climate/climate-lawsuit-puerto-rico.html?campaign\\_id=](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/19/climate/climate-lawsuit-puerto-rico.html?campaign_id=)

RAWSEP View: There are analogies of fossil fuel burning emissions with indoor residential wood burning emissions. The fact that many people are astounded by is that wood burning in the cleanest (certified) indoor wood stove in the United Kingdom (U K) produces more PM2.5 and CO2 emissions than the solid fossil fuel coal burning. Wood burning in that cleanest (certified) U K indoor wood stove produces 450 times the PM2.5 emissions and the fossil fuel natural gas burning. Good facts to know and to ponder. Why are we ignoring one solution, ending indoor wood burning pollution, when thinking about slowing climate change?

A consequential lawsuit in Puerto Rico and the remarkable lawyer behind it. A female lawyer with Milberg, one of the biggest class-action firms in the world, is pictured at a cemetery in Lares, Puerto Rico. She has brought one lawsuit that explains the climate crisis. A new lawsuit in Puerto Rico explains a lot about the battle over climate change. It may even hold some of the world's worst polluters accountable. A group of Puerto Rican municipalities is suing some of the biggest fossil fuel companies in the world, including Exxon, Chevron, and Shell, arguing that they are partly to blame for thousands of deaths and more than \$100 billion worth of damages caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017. It's too early to tell how far the case will go.

Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates.

RAWSEP View: Substitute wood burning for fossil fuels and you will see how the case can be made for suing the wood stove industry for the same reasons that a lawyer in Puerto Rico is suing the fossil fuel industry.

The meticulous 247-page lawsuit manages to tell the story of the climate crisis: how the rampant burning of fossil fuels heated the planet, how oil and gas companies caused much of the damage but downplayed the dangers, and how we are all now suffering the consequences in the form of more extreme weather. Legal experts say that if the companies are found liable, the potential damages could run into the hundreds of billions of dollars. The Center for Climate Integrity, a nonprofit organization, is helping garner support for the Puerto Rico case. 'The Holy Spirit is my co-counsel' About that lawyer. Her earlier cases were focused on environmental pollution. As a lawyer in central Illinois, she figured out how to use anti-littering laws and other municipal codes to take on Exxon, Shell, and ConocoPhillips for not cleaning up hazardous industrial sites. In 2017, Sims joined Milberg, one of the biggest class-action law firms in the world, which sent her to Puerto Rico to build a case against opioid manufacturers. While she was working on that, Hurricane Maria hit. What happened next: As she drove across the island to meet with local officials about the opioid crisis, it occurred to her that Puerto Ricans were now suffering at the hands of another set of corporations. Fossil fuel companies had warmed the planet and misled the public about global warming, making billions along the way. It wasn't so different from what had happened in DePue and Roxana, she thought. Then, she said, God told her to sue Exxon again. "The Holy Spirit tells me what to do," she said. "This bomb that went off here was climate change related. We just need to prove

it.” Just the beginning. Last year, Sims filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of **16 Puerto Rican municipalities**. It is part of a wave of litigation targeting fossil fuel companies over climate issues. But this one is unique. The suit is the first to claim that the planet-warming emissions produced by the defendants were directly responsible for the damage from a specific weather event. It is also the first to argue that the **fossil fuel companies engaged in a decades-long conspiracy to downplay the effects of global warming** — and that **by doing so, they violated the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, known as RICO**, originally passed to crack down on organized crime. RICO charges open up a serious new legal front for the fossil fuel companies, and they can result in exceptionally high damages. **Not coincidentally, RICO has also been used successfully against tobacco companies** and opioid manufacturers. Exxon and ConocoPhillips declined to comment. In a statement, Shell said, “We do not believe the courtroom is the right venue to address climate change, but that smart policy from government and action from all sectors is the appropriate way to reach solutions and drive progress.” If you take away just one thing, remember this: A tidal wave of climate litigation is coming for oil and gas companies, and lawyers like her are on a mission to make them pay.

Maine

RAWSEP View: Health is not discussed in the article below about the rising price of wood in Maine because of Canadian wildfires. This article does not address the obvious, pressing human problem of wildfire (wood) burning, the air pollution in the form of PM2.5 that has affected the ability of millions of people in the United States to live normal lives, and the wood burning pollution that forces people who care about their health to stay inside their homes with air purifiers.

Wood smoke pollution is wood smoke pollution, whether in the form of wood wildfire smoke or indoor residential wood burning wood smoke. This article focuses on the money made by Canada from timber sales to the United States, in the form of Mainers buying Canadian wood. This article states that timber supply from Canada has gone down because of Canadian wildfires. But the impact will be small on Maine, the director of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine says. The fires burning down a swath of land larger than Maine’s Great North Woods is just a small part of Canadian forest available for timber harvest. There are more than 700 million acres of boreal forest in Canada, and so far only 25 million acres have burned so far this year, which is only 3.6% of the forests in Canada. That’s unlikely to make softwood scarce enough for prices to surge. The director of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine said firewood prices, if they do rise as a result of the fires, will not impact consumers. This is contradicted by the U.S. Producer Price Index which shows the cost of softwood lumber has risen steadily since April 2023. The director of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine says other factors, such as higher interest rates are behind the rise in softwood lumber prices. Either way, the director of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine says he doesn’t see a cause for panic in the short term because “any impact that’s going to be felt from a slight supply disruption won’t be felt for a little bit.” There is no advice in the article below for Mainers to switch to cheaper, clean alternatives to wood burning for heat. There is no mention in the article of wood stove changeouts for the clean alternative of Heat Pumps that work at temperatures down to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and which also work as air conditioners.

Maine, Dover-Foxcroft

[Will Canadian wildfires impact the price of wood in Maine? Here's what we know](#)

NEWS CENTER Maine

He says the burning forests have slowed timber production in Canada, leading to a decrease in supply to the U.S., which in turn would drive up prices. Will Canadian wildfires impact the price of wood in Maine? Here's what we know. Timber experts say any impact would likely be minor, and wouldn't be felt for several months.

July 18, 2023.

**Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates.**

DOVER-FOXCROFT, Maine — As large swaths of Canadian forest burn, concern is growing over the impact the fires could have on the cost of wood.

[The United States imports more lumber from Canada than any other country on earth](#), and according to a [report from the World Bank in 2020, the U.S. bought more than \\$8 billion dollars of lumber north of the border](#).

The director of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine was interviewed. He says the burning forests have slowed timber production in Canada, leading to a decrease in supply to the U.S., which in turn would drive up prices. Still, the impact is likely to be small in Maine. Related stories.

[Wildfire smoke returns to Maine this week](#)

### [Air quality alert issued for much of Maine Tuesday](#)

He predicts prices, if they do rise as a result of the fires, will not impact consumers. Right now, that remains to be seen, as the U.S. Producer Price Index shows the cost of softwood lumber has risen steadily since April.

United States

### [What We Don't Know About the Health Effects of Wildfire Smoke - Time](#)

Time

While at first glance natural smoke from burning wood would seem less dangerous than industrial pollution, the size and composition of the organic ...

Indiana, West Lafayette

### [NAMI-WCI Family Support Group - WLFI West Lafayette Events](#)

WLFI

An Air Quality Action Day for PM 2.5 has been issued. Fine particulate levels are expected to be in the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups range.

New Jersey, Bergen County

### [Summer of smoke: How bad has NJ air been from Canadian wildfires? When will it stop?](#)

Bergen Record

The summer of smoke will continue in New Jersey for the foreseeable future ... visibility plummeted and the smell of burning wood was everywhere.

New York, Finger Lakes

### [Researchers investigate health impact of wildfire smoke in Finger Lakes | Fingerlakes1.com](#)

Fingerlakes1.com

New York, Rochester

Epidemiologists at the University of Rochester Medical Center expressed concern regarding the heightened levels of wood smoke in the air.

New York, Rochester

### [University of Rochester experts warn of potential long-term impact of wildfire smoke - WHAM](#)

WHAM

"We still see health effects, even with our low levels, but that's what the concern is with these high wood smoke levels.

North Carolina

### [Researchers Link Early-life Exposure to Wildfire Smoke with Early Use of Upper Respiratory ...](#)

UNC Health

... particulate matter (PM) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5) that ... light on many of the health effects that come from PM in wildfire smoke, ...

North Carolina, Mecklenburg

### [What you need to know about air quality monitoring in Mecklenburg County - WCNC](#)

WCNC

It includes criteria pollutants designated by the EPA, such as particulate matter (PM 2.5), carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide.

Ohio, Toledo

### [Real-time info about air quality is getting better in response to wildfires - Toledo Blade](#)

Toledo Blade

PM 2.5 is the primary pollutant of concern from wildfire smoke. It stands for particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in width, thinner than a human ...

Oregon, Multnomah County

### [Fires spur mandatory wood-burning restrictions for Multnomah County - oregonlive.com](#)

Oregon Live

The ban – a red burn status under the county wood-burning ordinance — includes all backyard burning, recreational fires, burning yard debris, ...

Oregon, Multnomah

### [Health Department announces mandatory wood burning restriction due to air pollution from ...](#)

Multnomah County |

Oregon, Multnomah County

[Multnomah County announces mandatory wood burning ban after fires, smoke pollution](#)

KATU

— Multnomah County has announced that wood burning will be temporarily banned in the metro area following a series of fires that have resulted in air ...

Oregon, Multnomah County

[Multnomah County issues burn ban amid poor air quality from structure fires - KOIN 6](#)

KOIN 6

Due to the poor air quality, the county implemented a ban on wood burning, recreational campfires, burning yard debris, agricultural burning and ... Sick of smoke? Here's the masks that will help. Burning wood is one of the biggest sources of air pollution in Multnomah County, officials said. Officials said the wood burning ordinance does not apply while cooking food using charcoal grills, smokers or wood fired ovens.

Oregon, Multnomah

[Wood-burning ban in Multnomah County as air quality drops - KPTV](#)

KPTV

Officials are issuing an immediate wood-burning restriction due to declining air quality Wednesday.

Oregon, Multnomah County

Pennsylvania, Mon Valley

[When a Mon Valley Air Pollution Episode alert is issued, whose air is at risk? - 90.5 WESA](#)

90.5 WESA

On top of that, communities in the Mon Valley are in close proximity to many industrial sources of fine particulate matter, also known as PM 2.5, ...

Texas, Houston

[As smoke from Canadian wildfires reaches Georgia, Houston faces multiple air quality threats](#)

Houston Chronicle

Other sources of particulate matter, like the industrial release of PM 2.5 or the recent surge in uncontrolled wildfires, does not have a similar ...

Washington, DC

[Five animals that have evolved to cope with wildfires - Washington Post](#)

Washington Post

... the skies orange and sent suffocating plumes of smoke over American cities. ... pits capable of detecting burning wood dozens of miles away.

Washington, DC

[5-year particulate matter exposure behind elevated mortality in Black patients with COPD](#)

Healio

WASHINGTON — Fine particulate matter pollution exposure over 5 years is ... As exposure to PM2.5 went up, odds for mortality also went up among ...

Washington, DC

[These animals evolved to live with fire. But can they outrun today's megafires? - Washington Post](#)

Washington Post

A woodpecker that specializes in hunting in burned bark. ... are infrared-sensitive pits capable of detecting burning wood dozens of miles away.

United Kingdom, Oxford

[Oxford Smoke Control Areas could expand to cover whole city - Oxfordshire Live](#)

Oxfordshire Live

Oxford City Council launched a campaign to address the risks of wood burning ... It is also increasing – small particle pollution produced by wood ...

Episode 56GF July 19, 2023. The Ask: Request a complaint-based system from 10 Attorney Generals suing the E P A to give wood stove users “certainty”.

The Ask: Please Contact 10 Attorneys General about an August 2023 suit versus E P A asking for “certainty” for wood stove users. RAWSEP asks for a complaint based system based on PM2.5 monitor data exceeding E P A PM2.5 “safe” limits, using fence-line measurements at yards of near neighbors.

A new icon has been added to the RAWSEP Website, which is now the nearest right icon. The icon is an ask that has already been described in Episodes 56GB (description of the parties who should be at the table when deciding on “safe” wood stove emission limits and fenceline measurements, rather than wood stove certification) and 56GBa (emails to contact 10 Attorneys General) (those two PDFs are included at the icon link).

<https://rawsepresidents.wordpress.com/1-please-contact-10-attorneys-general-about-august-2023-suit-versus-e-p-a-asking-for-certainty-for-wood-stove-users-rawsep-asks-for-complaint-based-sytem-based-on-pm2-5-monitor-data-exceeding-e-p/>

There is also a new icon added to the right of that, for “The Fox Owns the Forest” card game (TBA), which will be uploaded later this week.

Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates, see <https://RAWSEPresidents.wordpress.com> and click on the nearest right icon for The Ask: Contact 10 Attorneys General <https://rawsepresidents.wordpress.com/1-please-contact-10-attorneys-general-about-august-2023-suit-versus-e-p-a-asking-for-certainty-for-wood-stove-users-rawsep-asks-for-complaint-based-sytem-based-on-pm2-5-monitor-data-exceeding-e-p/> To the right of that, “The Fox Owns the Forest” card game (TBA), then to the right of that, the latest month, July 2023, of PDFs of articles with U R L’s to search on. To the right of that, Stickers to handout for RAWSEP, Games such as 1)Bingo for RAWSEP, 2)Crosswords for RAWSEP, 3)EndWoodSmokeJeopardy. 4)EndWoodSmokeMonopoly Games, 5) a RAWSEP Flyer, 6)the Un-Twist-it Game, and 7)“Vending Machines for PM2.5 monitors”, and icon links to 30 minute Youtube videos and Spotify podcasts as well as podcasts on Amazon Music Prime (free for Prime subscribers), [podcasts.google.com](https://podcasts.google.com), Cast Box, and Pocket Cast (Pocket Cast is only free on the phone App. Pocket Cast works on Apple phones) and, below those icons, icon links to monthly PDFs of articles with URL’s to search on, from June 2023 to May 2022.