

Episode 56WQ. August 8, 2024. Comment to National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee NEJAC

My name is Linda Karr. I live in Madison, Wisconsin. I am a canary in a coal mine, because of my proximity to indoor residential wood burning. I would prefer that the air pollution monitor be a PurpleAir PM2.5 monitor, not my human lungs. As a member of Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, the focus of our group is combatting the adverse health effects of breathing wood smoke because we are near neighbors of indoor residential wood burners, whose wood smoke infiltrates our yards and sickens us. Our group was formed in self-defense with the aim of first educating the general public about the health effects of wood smoke and then helping pass laws (federal laws, state laws, or local ordinances) that shut down polluting indoor residential wood burning using evidence from resident-owned hyper-localized, low-cost laser PurpleAir PM2.5 monitor data showing PM2.5 levels above Environmental Protection Agency National Ambient Air Quality Standards (EPA NAAQS) or above World Health Organization PM2.5 “safe” level, of 5 micrograms per cubic meter, in the yards of near neighbors of indoor residential wood burners. The reliable, accurate PurpleAir PM2.5 monitor is used side by side with \$100,000 EPA regulatory monitors on US EPA AirNow Maps of Smoke and Fire. During the June 7, 2023, incursions of Canadian wildfire smoke into the United States, residents were advised by governments to stay inside their sealed homes with multiple air purifiers running. That is how near neighbors of indoor residential wood burners have lived for years. That is no way to live. A statewide network of solar panels in New York state also registered a loss of 50% efficiency across New York state during that June 2023 wildfire incursion. Crippling a clean renewable makes the United States weaker, seemingly wasting an investment in a new technology by allowing unnecessary polluting indoor residential wood burning side by side with a modern clean air solution. Flights were also stopped or delayed because of wildfire smoke during that period, which also endangers National Security. An individual resident can initiate collection of hyper-localized data, but an individual cannot enforce laws, only governments can. That is why Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates is reaching out to you today, because our aim of self-defense of our health can be shown to also coincide with National Defense aims of the United States. Fires caused by intentional individual human activities such as indoor residential wood burning produce the same PM2.5 emissions as fires sometimes caused by intentional human activities such as campfires burning out of control and starting wildfires. But all wood burning fires produce very similar toxic emissions, whether they are wildfires caused by lightning strikes or simply spontaneous combustion caused by the feedback cycle of global warming. Wood burning is 90% PM2.5, particulate matter of 2.5 micrometer size, the perfect size to infiltrate the human lung, setting off a cascade of human health problems and early deaths. Wood burning in the most clean burning wood stove in the United Kingdom, the EcoDesign wood burning stove has been tested for PM2.5 emissions. The EcoDesign emits 450 times the PM2.5 as the fossil fuel natural gas burning. The EcoDesign emits 2.8 times the PM2.5 and CO2 as the fossil fuel coal burning. In the United States, the wood stove certification

program called New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for PM2.5 is deeply flawed, in the words of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Watchdog of the EPA, which in a February 2023 report used the phrase “deeply flawed” to describe a program where most if not all of the wood stoves certified by NSPS are highly polluting, being non-compliant with even the lax standards of the EPA, because of giant loopholes to compliance lobbied for by the wood stove industry. Burnwise, a mouthpiece of the wood stove industry has shown through influence on government websites promoting wood burning, even providing subsidies for indoor residential wood burning stoves, that Burnwise is only interested in selling wood stoves, without considering the human health effects of using wood burning in the home when today in 2024 there are truly clean energy sources for home heating and home cooking. As a modern country, we should not be promoting heating strategies that increase human illnesses and early deaths. The 2024 rebates of up to \$8,000 based on a sliding income scale for Heat Pumps that work down to 40 degrees below zero are the best alternative for any indoor residential wood burner who claims to be indigent as the reason to continue an unnecessary practice when we all, in rural as well as urban America have been connected to an electric grid since shortly after World War Two ended over 75 years ago. The Biden Administration has and will continue to strengthen the electrical grid and extend it if necessary. That would also improve our National Security. Environmental Justice for residents, who are fighting for clean air in their communities can be looked at as justice for the underdog, because the importance of the health of these near neighbors has been discounted and overlooked in the face of lobbying and advertising by the indoor residential wood burning industry. Residents may not have the option to move because of lack of money or may have made a bad bet on their choice of neighborhood to spend their retirement years. It is known that indoor residential wood burners are often more affluent than their near neighbors that bear the brunt of the air pollution, like “canaries in a coal mine” a harbinger for the rest of society if there is no change, and many people burn wood because it is fashionable. There is no hardship in giving up a fad or fashion, and the government can eliminate this superficial folly done thoughtlessly at the expense of the health and lives of near neighbors, knowing that by enforcing laws against air pollution, they are strengthening the health, and resilience of American people. Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates also covers news about other ways of burning wood which cause air pollution, such as Industrial wood burning which replaces Coal Burning (but, as mentioned earlier, emits 2.8 times the PM2.5 and CO2 as coal burning). Human activities have caused massive losses of soil organic carbon. The use of fire removes soil cover and leads to immediate and continuing losses of soil organic carbon. Farmers could adjust practices to maintain or increase the organic component in the soil. Practices that hasten oxidation of carbon, such as burning crop stubbles, a solid fuel with emissions similar to wood burning emissions, should be discouraged.