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Research on the Health Risks of Burning Biomass



New research by leading independent experts draws attention to serious impacts on human health of burning solid biomass, mainly wood, for heating and power generation in the European Union. It points to evidence that tens of thousands of EU citizens are dying prematurely every year as a result of exposure to air pollution from burning solid biomass. Other health impacts include cancers, cardiac and respiratory complaints, asthma attacks and working days lost to ill health.

Warning for quick fix that does not lead to the solution

[2019-09-03-mob-milieuorganisaties-voorzien-nieuwe-juridische-stikstofprocedures-waarschuwing-voor-quick-fix-die-niet-tot-de-oplossing-leidt-dutch.pdf](#)

This document written by Johan Vollenbroek from the Mobilisation for the Environment organisation warns against another quick fix and states biomass power plants should be shut down immediately.

"...It often remains unmentioned that the excessively high nitrogen emissions in the Netherlands also cause billions in damage every year..."

RECENT

[2019-09-03-mob-milieuorganisaties-voorzien-nieuwe-juridische-stikstofprocedures-waarschuwing-voor-quick-fix-die-niet-tot-de-oplossing-leidt-dutch.pdf](#)

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"...The Dutch Environmental Assessment Agency estimates damage to health and nature between € 2.5 and 12.6 billion damage per year, of which more than half due to premature death and health damage..."

"...The critical deposition limit is exceeded in 70% of nature, what leads to natural damage and a reduction in rare plants and animal species..."

"...Measures that lead reduced nitrogen deposition in nature areas will therefore also lead to less health damage..."

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Climate Change and Land

[2019-08-08-ipcc-summary-report-for-policymakers-on-climate-change-and-land-english.pdf](#)

This report was commissioned by the IPCC and is intended for policymakers and discusses sustainable forest management and carbon sinks and storage methods.

"...Developing, enabling and promoting access to cleaner energy sources and technologies can contribute to adaptation and mitigating climate change and combating desertification and forest degradation through decreasing the use of traditional biomass for energy while increasing the diversity of energy supply. This can have socioeconomic and health benefits, especially for women and children..."

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Why Burning Biomass Threatens European Health

[2018-02-02-fern-covered-in-smoke-why-burning-biomass-threatens-european-health-report-english.pdf](#)

This report contains new research by a leading independent expert draws attention to serious impacts on human health of burning solid biomass, mainly wood, for heating and power generation in the European Union.

"...More than 1,300 deaths a year are linked to air pollution from 27 biomass burning power stations in the EU..."

"...Exposure to smoke from domestic biomass use caused 40,000 deaths across the EU in 2014..."

[2016-06-14-ers-health-impacts-of-anthropogenic-biomass-burning-in-the-developed-world-english.pdf](#)

2016-06 \ \ ERS

ATTENTION!

We are analyzing reports and creating & posting new summaries every day. This is time consuming work but we will try to deliver multiple summaries per day. We are currently processing reports from 2019 and will work our way back into the [hundreds of official research reports commissioned the last decade](#).

"...Economic costs of health impacts from domestic biomass use in the EU are estimated to be in the range of 33 billion euros to 114 billion euros a year..."

"...Recast of the Renewable Energy Directive likely to cause between 435 and 1,100 additional deaths each year due to increased emissions from biomass power station, depending on the renewables target adopted..."

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Burning Biomass Creates Proven Harm to Human Health [2016-09-13-lung-health-organizations-letter-burning-biomass-creates-proven-harm-to-human-health-english.pdf](#)

This report is commissioned by a dozen health organizations who oppose policies that would encourage or expand the use of biomass for electricity production.

"...burning biomass creates air pollution that causes a sweeping array of health harms, from asthma attacks to cancer to heart attacks, resulting in emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths..."

"...Burning biomass from any source generates immediate dangerous air pollution that puts health at risk..."

"...Among the most dangerous of these emissions is particulate matter, also known as soot. These particles are so small that they can enter and lodge deep in the lungs, triggering asthma attacks, cardiovascular disease, and even death. Particulate matter can also cause lung cancer..."

"...Biomass combustion also creates nitrogen oxide emissions, which are harmful in their own right and also contribute to the formation of ozone smog and particulate matter downwind..."

"...Ground-level ozone pollution can trigger asthma attacks and cause premature death, and newer research shows possible links to reproductive and central nervous system harm..."

"...Burning biomass also creates carbon monoxide, which leads to headaches, nausea, dizziness, and in high concentrations, premature death, and carcinogens, including benzene and formaldehyde..."

"...The dangerous air pollution from burning biomass endangers some people more than others. Millions of infants and children, older adults, individuals with respiratory or cardiovascular disease or diabetes, and individuals with lower

incomes face a higher risk of suffering serious health effects from these pollutants.."

"...Burning biomass creates proven harm to human health through direct air pollution impacts, as well as the potential for increasing climate change..."

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Health Impacts of Anthropogenic Biomass Burning

[2016-06-14-ers-health-impacts-of-anthropogenic-biomass-burning-in-the-developed-world-english.pdf](#)

This report is commissioned by 22 universities and public health organizations worldwide and discuss the health impacts of burning biomass for energy.

"...Epidemiological studies in the developed world have documented associations between indoor and outdoor exposure to biomass combustion products and a range of adverse health effects. A conservative estimate of the current contribution of biomass smoke to premature mortality in Europe amounts to at least 40 000 deaths per year. We conclude that emissions from current biomass combustion products negatively affect respiratory and, possibly, cardiovascular health in Europe..."

"...Across Europe, the Renewable Energy Directive has set a goal to produce 20% of energy from renewable sources by 2020, increasing wood/biomass combustion for power generation. As mentioned in the Introduction, biomass combustion is expected to become the major source of primary PM emissions over the next 5-15 years. This will compromise efforts to reduce ambient PM concentrations to below the current WHO Air Quality Guidelines. This, in turn, will probably result in large numbers of avoidable, premature deaths across Europe over that time period..."

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