

## ***Risky Business: Burning Wood and other Biomass for Energy***

Though burning biomass is a source of renewable energy, the negative health consequences are so well documented that they far outweigh the benefits.

Wood smoke shares many common chemicals with tobacco smoke, including formaldehyde, benzene, toluene, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and carbon emissions. It is rich in dioxins, the most insidious family of toxins known to man, which accumulate in the environment and in mammalian lungs, building up over time, adding incrementally to health risks for every generation to come. Smoke from biomass burning is implicated in skyrocketing birth defects, including reproductive defects in unborn babies, asthma attacks, heart attacks and even SIDS.

### ***Morbidity and Mortality from Air Pollution—a Wake-Up Call***

The American Thoracic Society, May 22, 2006, found that for an increase of 10 micrograms per cubic meter of particulates over two years, the risk of dying was increased by:

- \*32% for people with diabetes
- \*28% for people with COPD, asthma and pneumonia
- \*27% in people with congestive heart failure
- \*22% for people with inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus

A current American Lung Association brochure states that a majority of asthmatics cite smoke of all kinds as a trigger for asthma attacks. “Particulate pollution has been linked to hospital admissions and emergency room visits for respiratory problems and to premature death.” Further, “The sulfur dioxide in wood smoke constricts air passages, making it a problem for people with asthma and for young children whose small lungs need to work harder than adult lungs. Even brief exposures to relatively low levels of sulfur dioxide can cause an asthma attack.”

The EPA, in “Health Effects of Particle Pollution,” March 8, 2006, states, “Many scientific studies have linked breathing particle pollution to a series of significant health problems, inclu

Do we need to hear more to rule out biomass burning in urban areas?

### ***Biomass/Wood Smoke Particulates are Major Contributors to Climate Change***

New satellite studies by NASA show that wood smoke aerosols (fine particulates) are a big contributor to changing climate conditions. Fine soot aerosols inhibit cloud formation, allowing more of the sun’s radiation to strike the surface of the earth, in effect increasing global warming. Smoke and other fine particulates also influence cloud thinning by “choking” clouds, and absorbing moisture from the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

For more detailed facts, see [www.burningissues.org](http://www.burningissues.org), a project of Clean Air Revival, a non-profit organization providing online scientific information on wood smoke and other fine particulates.

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