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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

Dear EQB members;

Many Pennsylvania residents have asked you to implement statewide Outdoor Furnace regulations. I strongly support their request.

The smoke and fumes emitted by these primitive devices are not only a public nuisance, but also a safety and health hazard. Many of my patients suffer from cardiac and pulmonary disorders that are exacerbated by the particulate and chemical pollution caused by outdoor furnaces.

The Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) has conducted stack tests on outdoor furnaces. Based on the test results, the average fine particulate emissions from one outdoor furnace are equivalent to the emissions from 205 oil furnaces, or as many as 8,000 natural gas furnaces. Cumulatively, the smallest outdoor wood-fired boiler has the potential to emit almost one and one-half tons of particulate matter every year.

Particulate matter (PM) emissions cause a host of health problems ranging from short-term health harms such as eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation, coughing and shortness of breath to long-term health problems including asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, pneumonia, heart disease and increased cancer risk. Other uncontrolled emissions from outdoor wood-fired boilers include carbon monoxide, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen cyanide, benzene, styrene, formaldehyde, arsenic, lead, chromium, dioxins, furans, PCBs and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

This very significant health and safety concern as well as the obvious nuisance concern suggest that Pennsylvania is deficient in protecting property owners from the harm caused by outdoor furnaces.

To remedy this situation I strongly suggest that statewide outdoor furnace regulations be implemented requiring that new furnaces must be installed at least 150 feet from the nearest property line, and must have a permanently attached stack that extends at least 10 feet above the ground and at least two feet above the highest peak of the highest residence located within 150 feet of the furnace.

I support regulations requiring that existing outdoor furnaces have permanently-attached stacks at least 10 feet above the ground, but those stacks must be at least two feet above the highest peak of the highest residence located within 500 feet of the furnace.

I also suggest that outdoor furnace use be prohibited from May 1 till November 1 so that neighbors not be deprived of enjoying their own property during these months when a significant portion of time is spent outdoors.

Sincerely,

Alice M. Laskaris, MD

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