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December 6, 2009

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Environmental Quality Board
P.O. Box 8477
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the environmental and health issues facing Pennsylvania residents due to the recent explosion in the number of outdoor woodburning furnaces being installed at private residences, and to voice our support for proposed DEP regulation of these devices.

Many of these units are being operated year-round in order to provide hot water for their owners. The result is smoke and odor during warm weather months when neighbors should be able to enjoy the out-of-doors and have their windows open for fresh air. In addition, most of these units have very short smokestacks, allowing smoke to remain at a much lower level year-round than that of a traditional home chimney.

We live in a residentially zoned area of a Wyoming County township. At present, there are five of these devices within a half mile of our property. All of these units--including one approximately 125 feet from our home-- are burned year-round, producing smoke and odor. This is forcing us to keep our windows closed during even the hottest summer days, as the smoke enters our home and makes it smell. We cannot make plans to entertain on our deck or in our lawn, nor can we hang clothing outside to dry on many days. We also believe this smoke is affecting our health--producing coughs, watery eyes, and irritated throats. We are certain that the close proximity of this many woodburners is devaluing our home. We have recently been forced to purchase an indoor air filtration appliance for our home--a ridiculous expense for someone living in a rural, residential area.

We believe that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania needs to address this issue, as our rural township and county officials simply refuse to act. The health consequences of breathing smoke on a daily basis are well documented and concerning. Having smoke-filled air will do nothing to attract new residents, businesses, or tourists to our Commonwealth. If no government action is taken to address this issue, neighbor will be forced to take legal action against their neighbor. That will certainly be bad for our communities, and will result in large expenses to both plaintiffs and defendants. We are certain you are aware that many neighboring states have already implemented controls on these devices.

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We have lived in our current home since 1985, and have worked tirelessly to purchase, landscape, and maintain it. It is devastating to see what is happening. We are both college graduates, active community volunteers, dependable taxpayers, and consistent voters. We feel we should be entitled to breathe clean air at our own home!

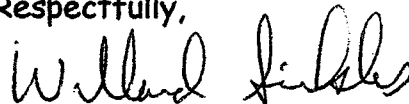
We are requesting that Pennsylvania environmental authorities consider the regulation of outdoor woodburners in the following ways:

- Most importantly, prohibit OWB's from being burned during the warm months of the year (perhaps May through September), when neighbors want to enjoy the outdoors, open their windows, and hang laundry outside.
- Require higher chimney heights in order to move smoke up and away from others' homes and lawns (for all times of the year).
- Require that owners of OWB's burn only dry, seasoned hardwoods. We have witnessed relatively green wood being burned in OWB's, and also suspect that some of our neighbors are burning trash in their units based on odors and smoke color.
- Provide consistent state oversight on this issue, so that it is not necessary for one neighbor to report another to DEP for violations.

We do believe that residents have the right to choose the type of heat they want for their homes, and we do understand that there are benefits to heating with wood. However, we also believe that the right to choose a type of heat should not expose neighbors to the health, aesthetic, and financial concerns of being subjected to 24-hour-per-day, year-round smoke and odor. We strive to be environmentally conscious in our lives (as the Commonwealth encourages), but these efforts are being wiped away by inconsiderate neighbors.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to express our opinions on this important environmental and homeowners' matter

Respectfully,



Mr. Willard J. Sickles, P.E.



Mrs. Gail (Noreika) Sickles

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