

Drax: Health and Environmental Justice Briefing



Drax Power Station in Yorkshire is the UK's single largest carbon emitter. In 2024 alone Drax emitted over 13 million tonnes of CO₂ - 3.5% of UK total emissions - and burned 7.3 million tonnes of wood, much of it from the clear-felling of biodiverse forests in the Southern USA, Canada and Europe, with catastrophic impacts on forests, wildlife, communities and the climate.

Climate change, environmental degradation and social inequalities intersect to make marginalised communities the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The burning of woody biomass directly contributes to increasing emissions, further exacerbating these vulnerabilities.

Air Pollution

Pellet mills emit harmful PM_{2.5}, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds linked to cancer, respiratory and pulmonary issues.

Pictured: The Gloster, Mississippi, trailer park community Blackmon Hole sits just metres away from Drax's Amite Bioenergy pellet plant. Photo: The People's Justice Council



Surveys of community members living locally to pellet production sites find that the **majority** of people living close to pellet mills experience dust every day and that air pollution and dust concerns prevent them from regularly doing things outdoors. The **majority** (86%) of surveyed households reported **at least one family member** diagnosed with one or more diseases associated with wood pellet mill pollution.

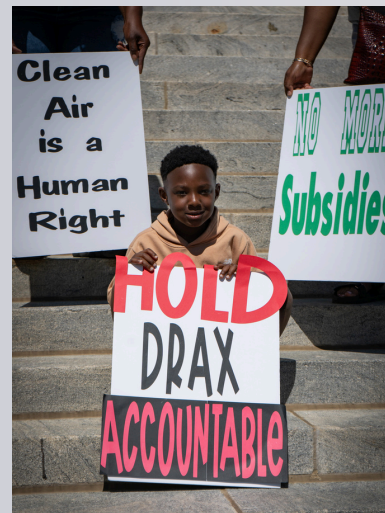
Burning wood in UK power stations also releases harmful PM 2.5 particulates, which according to the World Health Organisation, there is no safe level of these particulates for human health. Drax was found to be one of the top 5 emitters in Europe of PM₁₀ air pollution from power stations, with PM₁₀ being linked to heart and lung diseases.

Due to the health concerns associated with woody biomass combustion the American Lung Association formally opposes this industry.

Environmental Injustice

Wood pellet production is twice as likely to be located in 'environmental justice' communities, predominantly rural, Black, low-income and politically marginalised communities that are already disproportionately harmed by polluting industries.

Pictured: A young child from Gloster, Mississippi, holding a sign outside a Capitol Day protest demanding clean air and that Drax is held accountable for its air pollution. Photo credit: Sophia Knight



In its 2023 Resolutions the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, (NAACP) called upon environmental organisations to immediately cease their alignment and support of the forest biomass industry on policy proposals and instead to recognise and acknowledge the “environmental racism”, adverse climate change impacts, and forest degradation caused by the industry.

Legal Violations

Drax has violated environmental regulations 11,378 times from 2014-2024 at its pellet production facilities in the USA, and pellet mills Drax now owns in Canada have breached environmental laws 189 times since Drax started sourcing from them in 2012.

Forest Degradation Harms Communities

Forest degradation also destroys natural barriers that mitigate the most severe consequences of weather events; with the loss of forests leaving communities more vulnerable to severe floods.

Wetland forests, such as those felled for biomass in the Southern USA, serve as vital storm buffers protecting communities from flooding and hurricanes. Removing those forests leaves local communities unprotected and vulnerable.



Pictured: Left over slash pile from clear felling in British Columbia. Photo credit: Conservation North

Subsidising Drax Power Station directly contributes to driving the pollution and harm suffered by communities living locally to Drax's operations. Please contact