

Subject: Children/Environment

Dear Mr. Chanon,

The document about children's health and the environment is substantial and certainly a worthwhile first step in the direction of concern for the impact on children of environmental pollutants. However, I have concerns about some of the monitored conclusions, and about monitoring of pollutants in general, specifically the measurement of, and lack of emphasis on woodsmoke. Indoor biomass emissions are mentioned but not outdoor. Since "woodsmoke is the fastest-growing form of pollution in most American cities," according to the California Air Resources Board, mitigation of this pollutant should take high priority.

According to studies, woodsmoke is the second leading killer of children under five, in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, etc. I assume this is true for Mexico as your document does address the issue of indoor burning of biomass in that country. A 2004 study by Dr. J. Diaz of Universidad Autonoma de Madrid concluded that "Death rates for young children are related to seasonal levels of particulate air pollution and cold temperatures." Most particulate pollution in cold weather is from woodburning fireplaces. Woodsmoke is also the biggest source of dioxin in a community. In the CEC report, ozone levels appear to be of most concern and the report indicates that PM 10 and 2.5 levels are declining while ozone is increasing. Again, measurement is suspect, and I would conclude that the opposite is more likely the case.

I recently attended an Air Pollution Control District meeting for San Luis Obispo County, a county which is as good an example as any of incomplete and/or misleading monitoring of pollutants.

The District did conclude, correctly, that PM 2.5 levels are rising. They attribute this increase to road dust and sand dunes. Not mentioned in the discussion, or any of the literature, was the obvious: most of the particulate emissions result from the huge amount of woodburning activity which takes place in San Luis Obispo County. New York has a similar, serious problem with outdoor wood cookers. In the areas of California (coastal) where there is the greatest amount of woodburning, there are no monitors. Canada has the same "under-regard" for the health implications of woodburning. There is a perceived sense in all three counties that burning wood is natural and therefore not polluting. The U.S. EPA has concluded that the worst air anywhere in the country is in parks and campgrounds. A "healthy" holiday for a family is camping where the children sit around the campfire inhaling a pollutant that is twenty-five times worse than secondhand cigarette smoke and neck-and-neck with pre-1993 diesel exhaust.

My suggestion: In the process of implementing the significant work of the CEC, as presented in this document, a much more vigorous approach to the problem of woodsmoke should be additionally adopted.

Respectfully,

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(I am an individual, as opposed to an organizational, environmentalist.

I have been working independently on air quality
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