

## Letter to the Editor: Area pollution claims explored

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 31 March 2017 07:05

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\*\* The World Health Organization has determined that the number one environmental health hazard in the world is indoor air pollution – and it has nothing to do with second hand smoke. Nearly four million die every year from indoor pollutants, largely from indoor cook stove fuels like wood, coal and cow dung. The pollutant is extremely fine particulate matter that settles deeply in the lungs causing a multitude of respiratory problems, heart disease and stroke, primarily to children, women and elderly confined to the home all day. It was the same health hazard which shortened lives previous to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was effectively ended by the availability of fossil fuel energy.

\*\* Which brings us to the 2010 study by the Dine' Environmental Institute in conjunction with Joseph Bunnell and the US Geological Survey, which measured particulate airborne matter inside homes on the Navajo Nation where the Navajo suffer disproportionately from respiratory illness during the winter season. The conclusion was indoor air pollution, not outdoor air pollution from coal plants, but indoor pollution from coal and wood stoves was responsible.

The reason those dangerous stoves are in use is due to energy poverty, which is defined as a lack of accessibility to affordable, efficient energy – in other words, energy from fossil fuels – the energy which has doubled American lifespans since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That energy also permitted us access to clean water as well as fertilizers which have allowed us productive land that preserves fallow land, natural reserves and wilderness.

\*\* The third study is by John Boice of Vanderbilt University, also from 2010, titled “Cancer Incidence and Mortality in Populations Living Near Uranium Milling and Mining Operations in Grants, New Mexico, 1950 to 2004.” Boice evaluated cancer mortality and cancer incidence of miners, mill workers and local population. He determined that only miners had increased rates of cancer, not mill workers or local population – and only miners exposed during the 40s and 50s had high rates with a large decline in the 60s leading to a low incidence in the 70s and beyond as mining conditions improved.

In modern uranium mining the average annual radon exposure of uranium miners has fallen to levels similar to concentrations inhaled in many homes.

\*\* The next study regards Navajo cancer incidence rates from 1994 to 2004 by the Navajo Division of Health from records obtained from the Center for Disease Control, Navajo HIS and

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National Cancer Institute. Lung cancer is the primary cancer associated with radon exposure. Despite the five significantly large regions of uranium mining activity on the Navajo Nation, lung cancer is one-tenth that of non-Hispanic whites. That's ten times less likely to get lung cancer. This trend also occurs in other regions thru-out the West which have slightly elevated background radiation levels. Background radiation is the natural radiation surrounding us, seeping from the ground along with solar and cosmic radiation. In fact, radiation spas are frequented by many for health benefits.

\*\* National Cancer Institute and US Center for Disease Control data also reveals McKinley County is second from the bottom for cancer incidence rate among all New Mexico counties, sixteen percent lower than the state average. New Mexico has the lowest cancer incidence rate of all fifty states, fifteen percent lower than the national average. This translates to a whopping 31% lower than the national average for McKinley County.

Here are links to some of these studies.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140325-world-health-organization-indoor-fuel-pollution-death/>

<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jeph/2010/260525/>

<http://www.thegwpf.com/green-europe-lets-its-poor-freeze-to-death/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18714128>

<http://www.nec.navajo-nsn.gov/Portals/0/Reports/Navajo%20Cancer%20Rpt%20062610.pdf>

<https://www.statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov/incidencerates/index.php?stateFIPS=35&cancer=001&race=00&sex=0&age=001&type=incd&sortVariableName=rate&sortOrder=default#results>

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