

The effect of Wind turbines on health and property values

A major study by the respected Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory has found "no statistical evidence that operating wind turbines have had any measurable impact on home sales prices," according to a recent Berkeley news release.

The release says Berkeley "analyzed more than 50,000 home sales near 67 wind facilities in 27 counties across nine U.S. states, yet was unable to uncover any impacts to nearby home property values."

Ben Hoen, the lead author of the report, is quoted as saying, "Although there have been claims of significant property value impacts near operating wind turbines that regularly surface in the press or in local communities, strong evidence to support those claims has failed to materialize in all of the major U.S. studies conducted thus far.

"Moreover, our findings comport with the large set of studies that have investigated other potentially similar disamenities, such as high voltage transmission lines, landfills, and noisy roads, which suggest that widespread impacts from wind turbines would be either relatively small or non-existent."

The report was authored by Ben Hoen (Berkeley Lab), Jason P. Brown (formerly USDA now Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City), Thomas Jackson (Texas A & M and Real Property Analytics), Ryan Wiser (Berkeley Lab), Mark Thayer (San Diego State University) and Peter Cappers (Berkeley Lab). The research was supported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

In the meantime, in other criticism of turbines, an Australian professor of public health and sociology describes illness from turbines as "a strong candidate for being defined as a psychogenic condition."

Simon Chapman PhD, writing in a journal called The Conversation, said he'd "counted 155 health problems that had been attributed to wind farms including cancer, hemorrhoids, weight loss, weight gain and death." He has continued counting and now says the list stands at 198.

Prof. Chapman is critical of the claims being made by Dr. Sarah Laurie of the Waubra Institute in Australia, saying in effect that she hasn't substantiated them by identifying the sources, and also questions whether she is qualified as a researcher.

Dr. Laurie has testified at a number of Australian panels, and most recently by video conference at the Environmental Review Tribunal hearing on the Dufferin Wind Power approval.

The access number we had been given for the conference didn't work, but this is part of Dr. Laurie's evidence at a similar tribunal in Australia:

"The wind industry and some public health academics with no clinical experience in this area, frequently assert in Australia that the symptoms being reported are caused by the "nocebo" effect, by which they mean the Waubra Foundation's ongoing community education program about the reported symptoms and problems being reported by residents impacted by infrasound and low frequency rose from a number of sources, which they also refer to as "scaremongering."

"There is no research evidence collected from rural residents living near wind developments in Australia or anywhere else in the world to support this assertion that the symptoms reported by these sick residents are caused by knowledge about the reported health problems," she testified in Australia.

"There is, however, human and animal research in the fields of infrasound and low frequency noise, which provide direct empirical experimental evidence that both infrasound and low frequency noise can cause a range of physiological stress effects and symptoms, many of which are also being reported by wind turbine residents. Sound in those frequencies is now being measured inside the homes of sick people, and preliminary data is showing direct correlation between certain frequencies and specific symptoms," Dr.

Laurie said.

Meantime, the Centre for Media and Democracy's SourceWatch has published a critique of Dr. Laurie's Waubra Foundation:

?The Waubra Foundation is a front or astroturf group created by Peter Mitchell on March 1, 2010 to oppose wind farming in Australia. It was registered with Business Affairs as an incorporated body on that date but later deregistered on July 13, 2011.

?(It) claims to be an independent organization but it has direct links to the Australian Landscape Guardians, the Liberal Party of Australia and mining interests who in turn have inks with the right wing think tank, Institute of Public Affairs, (IPA).

?The Waubra Foundation does not exist in any physical sense, there is no building, just a post office box. The address, Box No.1136, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205, is shared by Sarah Laurie, the Australian Landscape Guardians and Lowell Resources, a mining investment company owned by Peter Mitchell.

?Sarah Laurie, the Waubra Foundation's ?medical director' and now CEO, promotes unfounded health concerns and an unrecognized condition called ?Wind Turbine Syndrome', allegedly caused by wind farms despite her lack of any recognized, peer-reviewed evidence that could possibly support such claims.

?She has a medical degree but is not a practicing doctor, has no medical research qualifications, nor does she have any recognized qualifications relating to acoustics or physics. She claims wind turbines can cause ill-health up to 10 km away but relies only on untested anecdotes and a poor understanding of the physics of sound,? the CMD says.

By Wes Keller