



Statement on Biomass Plants April 11, 2011

The American Lung Association in Florida has significant concerns regarding the proposed biomass plant and the potential effects it could pose for at-risk groups like those suffering from emphysema, asthma, diabetes and heart disease. Burning wood, or burning any substance, releases toxic chemicals and particles into the air which affect both the environment and respiratory health. Burning biomass could lead to significant increases in emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide and have severe impacts on the health of children, older adults, and people with lung diseases.

Additionally, diesel equipment critical to plant operation, like the trucks delivering wood, adds significant pollution on the roads and throughout nearby communities. A constant supply of fuel is needed requiring these trucks to make multiple, daily trips to and from the plant. The age of these vehicles and idling practices will also have a significant impact on the level of pollution emitted, and increase the potential damage to air quality and the health of residents in the area.

Furthermore, we have noticed a pattern nationwide of biomass plants being proposed for rural areas away from cities; where less protective pollution control restrictions and weaker permitting requirements apply. Plant proponents will say that they "meet the air pollution requirements" but the requirements themselves tend to be more lax.

The American Lung Association is dedicated to healthy air and healthy lungs for all Floridians. We encourage the leaders of Gulf County to consider the potential negative health effects on an already medically vulnerable and underserved community.