



## West Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

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Rockwool's entrance into Jefferson County, West Virginia, has been accompanied by opposition by many and support by a few. But more than anything, it has brought up questions.

- Questions about the future of a rural community on the outskirts of Washington DC.
- Questions about how politics plays into poverty.
- Questions about negotiating health over industry, or vice versa.

These are questions that are hard to answer.

Thankfully, there are certain facts that cannot be questioned.

The location of the Rockwool plant in Ranson is across the street from North Jefferson Elementary School. It is within 2 miles of 4 public schools housing 30% of Jefferson County's student population, as well as several daycare centers.

- The placement of the plant to within 2 miles of 4 public schools goes against the recommendations of the Environmental Protection Agency and The World Health Organization, who both state that schools should not be located near heavy industry. The WHO specifically states that schools should not be within 2 miles of heavy industry. ([www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/media/en/physical\\_sch\\_environment\\_v2.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/media/en/physical_sch_environment_v2.pdf?ua=1))

The facility has been approved for heavy toxic emissions, with smokestacks 21 stories high. In Rockwool's air quality application, it states that there will be large amounts of particulate matter per year (154 tons of PM10 and 134 tons of PM2.5).

- The American Heart Association concluded that exposure to particulate matter air pollution contributes to cardiovascular morbidity and mortality and long term exposure reduces life expectancy. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/20458016>)
- Ongoing research in the US, Canada, Italy and China has linked elevated PM2.5 exposure during pregnancy to premature delivery and low birth weight. The association has been replicated in multiple studies.

This plant will make Rockwool the #2 biggest polluter in the entire state of West Virginia.

- And yet, Rockwool's Clean Air Permit was given without a hearing in the community in which the plant would be built. No evaluation of the impact of the toxic emissions on the nearby schools has been conducted.

Unfortunately, this leads to more questions:

- How did Rockwool get approval to build this plant across the street from an elementary school when there is scientific evidence of the harm caused by toxic emissions and particulate matter air pollution?
- How does the addition of 150 jobs compare to the detrimental effect this plant will have on already established businesses and livelihoods based in agriculture and tourism?
- How is land that was zoned to be for mixed use residential become rezoned for industrial use

- How did this plant make it through the application review process without questions of public welfare and safety being addressed?

As pediatricians in Jefferson County, West Virginia, we see how poverty affects our patients on a daily basis. Some of our patients miss appointments because they do not have transportation. Other patients fail to gain weight or develop properly due to food scarcity. Many do not go outside due to not having access to safe neighborhoods or play spaces. And many of their parents have little time for anything else besides work and sleep-and most definitely do not have the energy to read notices in the local newspaper, speak to officials or hold their politicians accountable.

Once the Rockwool plant is open, we wonder if our patients will go outside less frequently due to concerns about air quality. Will they have access to clean local water? Will we be treating more asthma exacerbations? More cystic fibrosis exacerbations? Who will speak for these children? Do we need to witness the harm done to them before we act?

The good news is that the Rockwool plant is not a done deal. There are ways to stop Rockwool from opening the Ranson plant. Rockwool still needs approvals of the water bond, the sewer bond and the building permit to proceed. There is a grassroots citizen group that is actively opposing the Rockwool plant and has undertaken a legal fight.

We can speak for the children of the Jefferson County starting right now.

For more information, please go to <https://www.toxicrockwool.com> or join the Facebook group Concerned Citizens Against Rockwool.

Sincerely,

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