

**American Lung Association of the Northeast  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition  
New York Law and Environmental Justice Project  
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)  
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**Environmental and Public Health Groups Urge Bloomberg, Cuomo to Reject Plan to  
Burn Debris in Brooklyn Park**

*Shortsighted Proposal to Burn Waste Left From Hurricane Sandy Would Lead to Increased  
Levels of Air Pollution*

**(NEW YORK, NY)** – Today, a coalition of environmental and public health groups including the American Lung Association of the Northeast, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, New York Law and Environmental Justice Project and Citizens' Environmental Coalition, joined together in calling on Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Cuomo to reject a plan which would allow the burning of wood and other yard debris generated by Hurricane Sandy.

The groups' call comes in response to a request made by a contractor involved in Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts to secure a variance from local air pollution regulations. The variance would authorize the company to burn storm-related vegetative debris in Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. Burning wood debris may appear to offer a quick solution to coping with the vast amount of cleanup that remains to be done, but the groups contend it would have a detrimental effect on both air quality and public health.

Jeff Seyler, President and CEO of the American Lung Association of the Northeast declared, "Approving this proposal to allow debris to be burned would add insult to injury. Many parts of our region are still cleaning up from Hurricane Sandy and are already dealing with major indoor air quality issues because of flooding, water damage and the resulting mold growth. This proposal would increase air pollution which can also make people sick and send them the hospital. We urge the city and state to use safe non-combustion alternatives when disposing the remaining waste."

The groups explained that wood smoke contains at least 26 pollutants specified in the Clean Air Act as hazardous. Some include particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen

oxides, volatile organic compounds, hazardous air pollutants and carcinogens. These gases can irritate the eyes, skin, and respiratory tract, impair lung function, and affect vital organs.

“It is a terrible waste to just burn the trees that came down during the storm into ashes and smoke,” said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with the New York Public Interest Research Group. “There is a strong market for wood chips which can be used for garden mulch and a variety of other purposes. In this way, these casualties of the storm can be given a new life.”

The American Lung Association’s *State of the Air Report 2012* shows that the air is getting incrementally cleaner in the New York City metropolitan area. Allowing a variance that would give contractors to green light to burn debris and create more pollution would not only threaten this important progress but place public health at risk.

If the variance is approved, burning could begin as early as this week.

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