

# Smoke Causes Increase In Hospital Treatments

BY TERRY POPE

The smoke, combined with extreme heat and humidity, has caused an increase in treatments for respiratory problems at the Brunswick Hospital in Supply.

In recent weeks, the number of asthmatics and chronic lung patients receiving treatment at the hospital has risen by as much as 50 percent, said Doug Timms, director of cardiopulmonary services.

"Usually during the summer when there is a heat wave, the number of respiratory patients will pick up," Timms said. "But when you add smoke along with the

heat and humidity, it's like a combination of hazards."

Timms said Brunswick County residents subject to asthma attacks or who have lung conditions should avoid the smoke if possible. Passengers in cars that drive through a patch of smoke are at risk as well, he said.

"If you can smell it in the air," Timms said, "then there is enough air pollution to irritate the lungs."

Persons living downwind from areas that are burning should take measures to avoid the smoke if they have lung or breathing conditions, he said.

A part-time employee of the cardiopulmonary unit

at the Brunswick Hospital arrived at work last week only to be rushed into treatment.

"She practically had an asthma attack and had to take treatment while here," Timms said.

Driving through an area of heavy smoke while on her way to work had irritated the employee's asthma condition.

Residents have been leaving the Shallotte area to escape the smoke. Lena Ross, of Shallotte, said she knows of several people, including her husband, R.A. Ross, who have left town until the smoke clears.

Timms said the retirement community, or persons

who have moved South to escape air pollution and smog conditions, can find the smoke particularly frustrating.

"These people go from essentially no air pollution to a potentially hazardous situation," Timms said. "They go out in the morning to get the newspaper and it's a slap in the face."

Timms said someone should have notified residents through the media that local burning might cause a temporary air pollution problem.

Persons with chronic lung conditions or persons subject to asthma attacks need to be alerted of such conditions, he said, before they occur.

# Riverview Resident Leads Efforts To Clear The Air

BY TERRY POPE

Ginger Smith and her family moved to Brunswick County last year to escape the air pollution in Los Angeles County, a California metropolis with frequent smog conditions.

Three of her seven family members have asthma. When smoke from controlled burnings set off the smoke alarms in her Riverview mobile home last Sunday at 6 a.m., she decided it was time to fight back.

"When you move to the country, you don't expect to have to deal with this sort of problem," Ms. Smith said. "Especially over a period of three weeks."

She began calling county, state and federal authorities to see why controls were not placed on burning in Brunswick County, especially during stagnant air conditions.

"The more calls I made, the angrier I got," she said.

From her conversations with environmental officials, she learned that Brunswick County's air quality standards had not been tested in over two years. Officials from the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development office in Wilmington installed a device to test the air quality at Riverview, a subdivision near Shell Point, last Thursday morning.

They placed the equipment on the dock at Willard and Flora Ritter's house overlooking the Shallotte River, across from Ginger and Duane Smith's home. As Ms. Smith said, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

"I hope it's effective," Ms. Smith said. "I don't think we'll ever know what the air quality standards have been here for the past two weeks."

Although conditions improved by the end of the week, smoke was so heavy in the area last Wednesday



GINGER SMITH, and two of her children, Casey and Kim, outside their home at Riverview. Ms. Smith said her family moved to Brunswick County from California last year to escape air pollution.

if the burnings are allowed to continue in the future, she said.

"If you had rented a place at the beach for the week and you were forced to breathe the kind of air that we have for the past two weeks," she added, "would you come back?"

## Heavy—

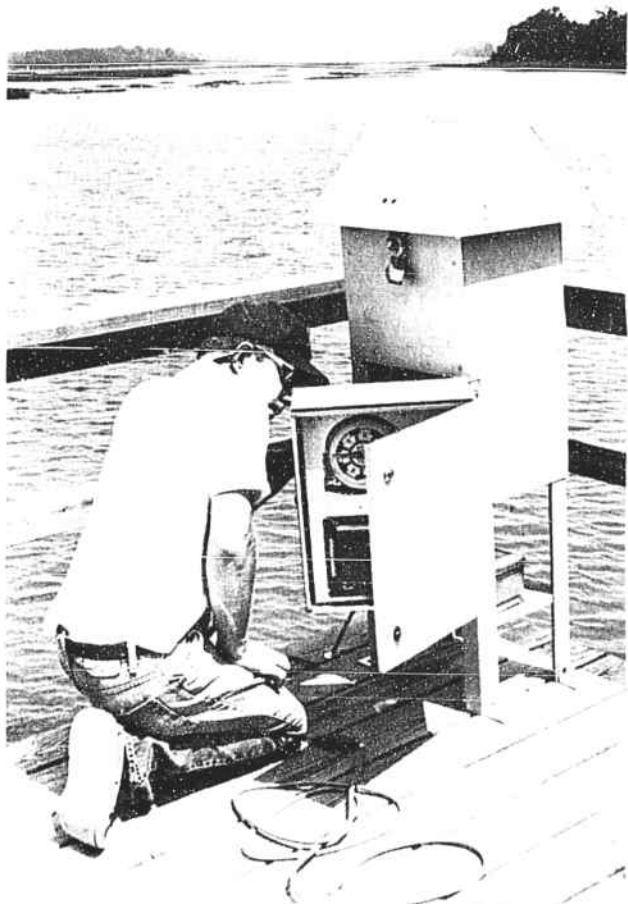
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responsible for monitoring local compliance. "I don't know of a single violation," he said.

Last week, acreage still smoldering from controlled burnings included 200 acres owned by Georgia Pacific and 140 acres owned by Federal Paperboard Co., as well as smaller plots being cleared for several golf courses under development in the county.

This week, a wildfire covering more than 100 acres continues to burn in the Green Swamp north of Shallotte.

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STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

BILL COCHRANE, an environmental engineer with the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development office in Wilmington, installs an air quality monitor on the dock of Willard and Flora Ritter's home at Riverview last Thursday morning.

that Duane said he had trouble driving to work.

"By the time I got to Shallotte, you could not see 100 yards ahead of you," he said. "They have placed signs on U.S. 17 warning motorists of the smoke, which is really indicative of how bad it is."

Ms. Smith is a nurse at the Brunswick Hospital in Supply. It takes six days to stabilize an asthma or chronic lung disease patient who has suffered a breathing attack caused by irritants, such as smoke, she said. Such patients must remain hospitalized during that time.

"There are other methods in burning and clearing land," she said. "I don't think the people at the state capitol in Raleigh would allow this to happen there. Just because we have fewer people in Brunswick County, I don't think it's fair for us to have to

stand still for it to happen here."

Ms. Smith said her civil rights have been violated in recent weeks because individuals and companies have been allowed to burn when conditions were hazardous to the air quality standards in Brunswick County.

Legislative action in 1982 removed Brunswick County from the list of high hazard counties for controlled burning during large land clearing operations. That may have endangered a lot of people's lives in Brunswick County, especially the elderly or persons who have trouble breathing, she said.

Ms. Smith hopes the county will be placed back on the high hazard list so the burnings will stop.

She also wants to know why the environmentalists who are responsible for insuring safe air quality stan-

dards are not the ones to issue burning permits. The N.C. Forestry Service issues burning permits; however, they are removed from deciding if a controlled burning would be safe for the air, she said.

"I just wish that something could have been done earlier which could have prevented this situation," she added.

She would also like to see large landowners chose alternative methods for clearing land in the future.

"We need our woodlands, but we need our people, too," she said.

"My main reason for moving away from an urbanized area was pollution," she said. "I didn't want my children exposed to those conditions."

Brunswick County will lose tourists

## Area Can Expect Some Rain

Rain is in the area forecast for the next few days, along with more summertime heat.

Precipitation should be near normal, about three-quarters of an inch, said Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady. Temperatures should also be near normal, ranging from the low 70s at night to around 90 during the daytime.

For the period July 21 through 27,

Canady recorded a maximum high temperature reading of 100 degrees on the 22nd. The minimum low, 67 degrees, occurred on the 21st.

An average daily high of 94 degrees combined with an average daily low of 71 degrees, he said, for a daily average temperature of 82 degrees, about two degrees above normal.

Canady recorded no precipitation during the period.

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