

States Will Ask Feds To Review Coal Ash Storage Impact On Poor

By Donna Martinez

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Raleigh - State regulators will ask federal officials to review the impact of coal ash storage near low-income communities. An environmental justice review aims to make sure a project doesn't disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) performed such a review on a new lined storage space for coal ash in Wilmington near the Sutton Steam Station and determined it would not have a disproportionate impact on neighbors.

No one lives within a mile of the site, according to the agency's report, which evaluated a broader census tract encompassing an area 5 miles by 8 miles. There would be practically no impact from transferring the coal ash, since it would come from the steam station rather than be trucked in.

DEQ

has asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Civil Rights, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the commission's state advisory committee to review its findings. The state intends to notify neighbors by mail about the project.

Tom

Reeder

, assistant secretary at

DEQ

, said in a statement the agency released that the state looked for negative effects caused by moving coal ash from basins into storage landfills and sought ways to protect neighbors. Census data was used to identify residents' race, ethnicity, income and other factors.

Regulators also looked at the potential for contamination, erosion, traffic and dust control.

Similar reviews will take place everywhere that Duke Energy proposes to store the material in landfills.