

Independent measurement of air quality in the village of Drmno, 500 meters away from thermal power plant Kostolac B, showed that the residents for 30 days in the period from November 17 to December 16 were exposed to such concentrations of particulate matters with a diameter smaller than 2.5 microns that exceeded maximum permissible limits for even 26 days, and to harmful effects of particles with a diameter smaller than 10 microns for 15 days, announced CEKOR.

Centre reminds that according to applicable Serbian regulations the population should not be exposed to PM10 concentrations exceeding 70 percent of the maximum daily limit values for more than 35 days in a calendar year and said that the villagers of Drmno were exposed to PM10 concentrations greater than 70 percent of the maximum permissible daily values during 24 out of 30 days.

“30-day independent air quality measurement was conducted after initiative of locals gathered around the residents association “Zdravo Drmno”, when, according to their testimony, on August 24 in the early evening the big black soot flakes started to fall from the stacks of the nearby thermal power plant Kostolac B. Based on information from the villagers of Drmno and without notice and explanations of competent authorities, CEKOR tried to find out the cause of the accident and the level of harmful effect that comes from the pollution. Therefore, on the same day, on August 25 CEKOR alarmed the environmental inspection within the Ministry of Environment, which conducted the investigation and requested a report on air quality in Drmno during that month and on the day of the accident. It was announced from the Institute of Public Health of Pozarevac that according to their findings permissible levels for particulate matter PM10, SO₂ and soot were not exceeded” the statement said.

However, the findings of the Republic Inspector for Environmental Protection, which arrived on December 2 showed that during August ESP rappers on Unit B2 were not operating properly, causing more dust emissions and electrostatic precipitators were not able to collect it. The deficiencies were remedied and specific records regarding electrostatic precipitators operation was introduced.

Certain data were collected from November 17 till December 16 with the help of a mobile measurement device for industrial emissions control, provided by the Bankwatch Network and these data show that there are problems to reduce pollution in Drmno to legally permissible limits, claims CEKOR.

Ioana Ciuta from Bankwatch Network said that Serbia is one of the few countries in Southeast Europe which adopted the regulation on air protection with a similar form as the European Union.

“However,” said Ciuta, “it is more important that this regulation is applied, and that environmental authorities in Serbia thoroughly and responsibly investigate what is causing so intolerably high levels of pollution of PM 2.5 particulate matter, which in addition to polluting the local community fly hundreds of kilometers away. Such high levels of pollution “have to lead to emergency measures, from the implementation of technical measures through limitation of operation or even to shutting down big polluters” concludes Ciuta. Vlatka Matkovic Puljic, advisor for health and the environment from the Brussels Health and Environment Alliance says “in order to reduce air pollution in Serbia, it takes urgent action to protect public health. The effects of such air pollution are long-term and cumulative and affect all citizens in the country. The medical community and citizens are concerned about their health and health in general. We urge decision makers to move from declaratory policy towards concrete actions.