

Frankie Williams

February 27th, 2024

Summary: This is a brief, informal interview with a passerby who noticed Repair Lab team members installing an air sensor at Zion Baptist Church in Newport News. In the interview, Williams describes his experiences with coal dust, including symptoms he has experienced and witnessed others experiencing. [00:00:00]

Adrian: Can you tell me your name?

Frankie Williams: Uh, my name is Frankie Williams. And, uh, I uh.

Adrian: How long you been living here?

Frankie Williams: Uh, practically on and off, uh, almost about 45, 50 years.

Adrian: And, um, what's your relationship with the coal dust like?

Frankie Williams: Um, you know, you're back up in the days, as a uh, well, you know, I was telling your other partner right here.

Adrian: Mm-Hmm.

Frankie Williams: That, um, you can, uh, you can wash your white clothes and hang them up on the line and come on out there year by year when you think they are dry. And then them clothes be just as gray as the dust, the dirt on the ground. You know what I mean? Yes, yes, you know,

Oh, d'ya know I have asthma now.

and that stuff, um, is terrible. Especially up in the summertime, it get real bad, They know you, and especially, uh, you don't never know, uh, what you're breathing in. You may not smell it, but as, um, as you get closer to that coal pier, you can actually blow your nose up in a clean white handkerchief and you will see some particles in that, in that rag. Because you, especially up in the summertime. Especially up in the summertime, it get real bad, it get real bad.

D'ya know the people gotta wash their cars often, yeah because that coal dust be coming. They, d'ya know, they try to sprinkle the water over to try to keep the

dust down. You know, yeah but its still, um still, and end up reaching up in the atmosphere.

Because, I don't know.

Adrian: Yeah. Do you, uh, have you had any breathing problems?

Frankie Williams: Oh, D'ya know I have asthma now.

Now, I don't know, um, if it came from that cold dust here, but I, but I know yeah coming up as a kid, I didn't have asthma here, but now I have it. Oh, now I don't know. It coulda had came from the dust.

I don't know.

Angela Harris: It did. That's why we have this monitor here to make sure we can have our checks and balances.

Frankie Williams: Yes. Now, I got to, I gotta take my nebulizers and also I, uh, up on the back of my wheelchair, they, you know, they know got me a albuterol pump. You know, anything, especially up in the summertime, I have it.

D'ya know when I be coming down through, through this way, yeah by car , live all the way at the bottom now. I just recently moved, uh, down there, and I'm right among it.

Adrian: When did you start having asthma? How many years ago do you think?

Frankie Williams: Um, maybe about, about seven, eight years ago.

Adrian: Do you, are there, do you know other people in the community who have breathing problems?

Frankie Williams: Yeah, a lot of them have it. A lot of them have breathing problems, yeah, but a lot of them are just like I am.

You know, you're wondering where did it come from? Which it can be from the coal particles. You never know what's in this air.

Adrian: Yeah. Thank you.

Frankie Williams: You never know what's up in the air. You're just like New York, Philadelphia, and places like that right there. You're highly up in pollution, because the length of cars and all of that exhaust system for the big 18 wheeler trucks and all of that stuff, all that stuff is smog in the air.

They actually, you breathing the air, but you ain't breathing clean air. You bring you breathing dirty air. Or you think it's clean, but it is not, it's not. All at the same time it's hurting you. Believe me.

Adrian: How does that make you feel?

Frankie Williams: ... Well, well, I feel normal, you know, but you know, you sometime at the house, d'ya know you when I'm just sitting down, you know, you know, then of a sudden I had to hit my inhaler or get on my nebulizer.

Adrian: Yeah.

Angela Harris: Are you in the Tidewaters, or...

Frankie Williams: Aqua Vista. Yeah. Yeah. I'm in Aqua Vista.

Angela Harris: Thank you so much!