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Fashion Week Power Source Upsets Neighbors

By **MIREYA NAVARRO**

Some neighbors call the 311 help line. Others say they now take a different route to walk their dogs. Parents complain of headaches. Children say they cannot sleep.

A year after organizers announced that it was going green, [Fashion Week](#) has become an environmental worry for people living near [Lincoln Center](#). As models in striking ensembles dazzle the crowds inside the tents day and night, residents outside fret over what they say is the constant noise and smell of the event's diesel power generators.

"They got to do what they got to do, but they make people suffer for it," said Hector Velez, 52, a painter and father of two who lives nearby at Amsterdam Houses, the public housing complex.

"What can that pollution do?" he asked a reporter worriedly.

Fashion Week, which ends on Thursday and is also staged each September, [moved to Lincoln Center last fall](#) from Bryant Park in Midtown Manhattan. For over a week, nine portable generators scattered around the temporary fashion village erected at Damrosch Park have been burning diesel fuel to power the event's lighting, heating and blow dryers.

Such generators have long been part of outdoor events in the city, like street fairs and movie shoots. City Health Department officials say they have not studied how much pollution they emit.

But other health experts say the city already fails to meet federal clean air standards as a result

of emissions from heavy traffic, boilers and other sources of pollution. Of particular concern with diesel emissions is fine particulate matter, airborne material that can worsen lung and heart diseases and cause developmental problems in children, among other health effects.

“Any addition to the exposure levels we’re already experiencing in New York is something that should be avoided to the extent possible, given what we know about the toxicity and potential health effects of diesel emissions,” Dr. Frederica P. Perera, director of the Columbia Center for Children’s Environmental Health at Columbia University, said in an interview.

Officials with [IMG Fashion](#), which produces Fashion Week and rents the generators from [Aggreko](#), a power provider with offices in Linden, N.J., said Wednesday that they had met all city requirements on noise and smoke and had not received any complaints on the organizers’ “command center” telephone line.

“We’re very proud of our team and vendors’ continued efforts to be green and are striving to grow those efforts each season,” Zach Eichman, an IMG spokesman, said in a statement.

This event is using [energy-efficient lighting](#) and heating and cooling systems, eliminating printed press materials and reusing tents and site materials for other events, the company said.

That does not satisfy some environmental campaigners. “Most diesel generators are not meeting the most stringent emission standards and are therefore still very polluting,” said Isabelle B. Silverman, a lawyer with the [Environmental Defense Fund](#) who works on air quality issues.

Farrell Sklerov, a spokesman for the city’s [Department of Environmental Protection](#), said the generators used at Fashion Week run on low-sulfur diesel fuel. But they have no diesel particulate filters to further reduce soot, he noted.

Because of the “high-profile nature” of Fashion Week, city inspectors have visited the site and verified that the generators have mufflers to reduce noise and produce no detectable odors or dense smoke, he added. But Mr. Sklerov noted that emission standards were set by the federal government. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#), which had imposed fairly modest emission controls on “nonroad” diesel engines like those used by generators, began phasing in stricter

standards in 2008, and they will all be in place by 2015.

Many residents interviewed at buildings in the Lincoln Center area argue that Fashion Week and its power needs are too big for its new perch in Damrosch Park. They point out that they are already coping with diesel exhaust from idling tour buses awaiting theater, music and dance fans outside Lincoln Center and from heavy traffic along Broadway and Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues.

Perhaps Fashion Week should move again, some suggested.

“The noise, the fumes — I smell it all day and all night,” said Violetta Ungar, another resident of Amsterdam Houses. “Why don’t they go to the Javits Center?”