



Wind turbines can be harmful to health, an operator convicted in Tarn, a first in France

Fontrieu

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By

The Toulouse Court of Appeal recognizes that wind turbines installed near a home in a village in Tarn, on the edge of Hérault, are harmful to health. The operator was ordered to compensate local residents to the tune of 128,000 euros. This is a first in France.



Wind turbines installed on the heights of Fontrieu in Tarn © Radio France - Stéphane Pocher

"It's a relief. You can't imagine. Our joy is immense. Our suffering is finally recognized after so many years of legal proceedings." Christel and Luc Fockaert are enjoying what seemed impossible to them six years ago. This Belgian couple has just won an appeal against the operators of a wind farm installed on the heights of Fontrieu, in the **Haut Languedoc regional park**.

Wind turbines are harmful to local residents The noise and visual pollution generated constitutes **a nuisance for the neighborhood but also has a harmful impact on health**. This is what the judgment pronounced on July 8, 2021 by the Toulouse Court of Appeal says. The suffering denounced and the devaluation of the Fockaert house were recognized on appeal, which was not the case at first instance.

"This is unprecedented in France in terms of health", specifies Alice Terrasse, the plaintiffs' lawyer.

The wind turbines were installed on the heights of Fontrieu in 2008 on municipal land. From the village, the equipment is invisible, but **the noise is perceptible to the closest residents** depending on the direction of the prevailing wind (northwest) and the power of the wind turbines installed on rotating heads. The white lights, aggressive day and night following a technical malfunction, were replaced by red lighting in 2015. That is to say, seven years after they were put into operation.

"We spent hours trying to contact a technician. No one answered. We were left to our fate," they explain. The nearest wind turbine is in fact 700 meters from their home.

In 2015, the plaintiffs decided to leave the farmhouse purchased in 2004. The home had been renovated and partly transformed into a gîte. *"Living here had become unbearable. The first symptoms did not appear immediately,"* specify Christel and Luc.

Headache, dizziness, fatigue, tinnitus, tachycardia, loss of consciousness

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At first instance, this couple was dismissed by the Castres court at the beginning of 2020. Christel and Luc claimed 350,000 euros in damages. The judges recognized the noise pollution at the time, but not in an abnormal way. The Toulouse Court of Appeal does not have the same reading of the expert opinions carried out: it recognizes the **reality of a wind turbine syndrome**, leading to an alteration of the state of health, defined moreover by the WHO as a state physical, mental and social well-being.

Headaches, nausea, nosebleeds and even sleep disorders: the list of symptoms associated with wind turbines is long, according to local residents. Wind turbine syndrome is **a disease not recognized as such**, but which impacts people living nearby. In France, the distance between homes and wind turbines is set at 500 meters.

Wind turbine syndrome affects more and more people living near wind turbines

The Haut Languedoc regional park is the park most impacted in Occitanie by this equipment. The authorization covers a maximum of 300 works, 80% of the equipment has been installed. The prefects of Hérault and Tarn are committed to ensuring that the threshold is not exceeded, assures Emmanuel Forichon, representative in Tarn of the [Tous nos Energies collective](#), opposed to the proliferation of the wind industry in rural areas.

"The public authorities must have real awareness. They cannot always be in denial. Wind turbines are a source of noise and visual nuisance. And today, the court confirms, they have an impact on the health."

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The operators of the wind farm will have to compensate local residents to the tune of **110,000 euros** (damages and reimbursement of costs). They had until October 8 to appeal to the Court of Cassation. This is not the case, assure the plaintiffs.

These wind turbines constitute a **financial windfall** for communities: the six wind turbines in Fontrieu bring in 100,000 euros per year to the community of municipalities.



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