

# Rockwool Ranson, WV

## *Fact Sheet*

In 2018, the Danish mineral wool insulation company Rockwool began site work on a newly proposed manufacturing facility in Ranson, West Virginia, USA. Over the past nine months, community members have [raised serious concerns](#) about the environmental impacts of the proposed plant, and nearly every municipality within the airshed has [adopted resolutions](#) in opposition to the proposed factory. While Rockwool portrays itself as a green company, public records indicate that the new factory would be one of the largest sources of air pollution in the state of West Virginia. We are asking for Danish environmental groups to stand in solidarity with concerned U.S. citizens to hold Rockwool accountable.

### Background

Rockwool's manufacturing process in the U.S. includes melting industrial slag and rock to produce mineral wool insulation fibers. The company's [air quality permit application](#) indicates that its nearly 50,000 square meter factory and 65 meter smokestacks would be a significant source of at least nine different categories of air pollution, including several known carcinogens. According to the EPA's National Emissions Inventory, the facility in Ranson is projected to be one of the [two worst emitters](#) of volatile organic compounds in West Virginia and among the top ten in the state for particulate matter.

Rockwool's only other American factory is located in Byhalia, Mississippi, which along with West Virginia make up the two poorest states in the U.S. Both states also rank near the bottom in stringency of their environmental policies. Rockwool is creating major environmental challenges in places that are least prepared to manage them. While Denmark has positioned itself as a global environmental leader, one of its major corporations is exporting toxic emissions that would be unacceptable in its own country.

### Key objections

1. **Air emissions in excess of similar Danish operations** – After analyzing Rockwool's air quality permit application, experts have determined that emissions from the proposed Ranson factory will far exceed their Denmark facilities, which the company often touts as evidence of the safety of their operations. For example, nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions will be nearly fifty percent higher than a similar plant in Øster-Doense, Denmark, phenol emissions more than 200 percent higher, and the carcinogen formaldehyde more than 300 percent higher. Furthermore, meteorologists have noted that Ranson is located in a valley with prolonged periods of calm wind, which means that air dispersion of toxic chemicals will be insufficient and problematic for local populations.

2. **Proximity to schools** – One of the most significant concerns raised by community members is the close proximity of the proposed factory to several schools. One school is located just across the street while four others are within 3 kilometers (2 miles) of the site. According to the [World Health Organization](#), schools should not be located “within two miles of facilities that release toxic chemicals into the air or land.” In August, the company refused a request from the president of the local school board to [pause construction](#) on the factory until an independent human health risk assessment could be conducted. Ironically, West Virginia law prohibits constructing schools near “odoriferous plants or industries;” however, there is apparently no rule prohibiting such factories being built next to an existing school.
  
3. **Significant water quality risks** – The Rockwool factory is being built in a location with karst geology, meaning a prevalence of underground drainage and sinkholes. The company has already been [cited for multiple violations](#) due to sinkholes at their construction site. At least one of the sinkholes is located directly under a sediment pond that would contain contaminated water from factory operations. The company is risking wells and other drinking water in the region’s fragile ecosystem due to the factory’s poor location.
  
4. **Rockwool undermines Danish climate commitments** – The country of Denmark has committed to phasing out the use of coal for energy generation by 2030. In fact, Rockwool recently transitioned its factory in Vamdrup, Denmark to a highly efficient, low-emissions electric arc furnace (EAF), which is becoming the norm for newer fiberglass and mineral wool manufacturing facilities. The company also recently announced it would [update its plant in Moss, Norway](#) to EAF technology by 2020, which could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the facility by as much as eighty percent. However, Rockwool has proposed the construction of a coal-fired factory in Ranson, West Virginia that will operate for decades to come. At a recent event in New York City, Rockwool public affairs manager Shawn Torber cynically stated, “We have no problem using renewable energy, but West Virginia has not made that choice yet.” Denmark’s climate commitments are undermined when its corporations fail to adhere to consistent values and standards when operating outside of Scandinavia.

A group of U.S. citizens, led by former Young Democrats of America president Rod Snyder and retired meteorologist Tim Ross, will travel to Denmark in early April to meet with Danish environmental groups and journalists to provide additional information on Rockwool’s disastrous environmental practices in the U.S. For more information, please visit [www.toxicrockwool.com](http://www.toxicrockwool.com) or contact Rod Snyder at [rodsnyderwv@gmail.com](mailto:rodsnyderwv@gmail.com).