

# Coal dust pollution plagues Richards Bay residents

HEALTH CONCERNS

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*Coal dust on the ground.*

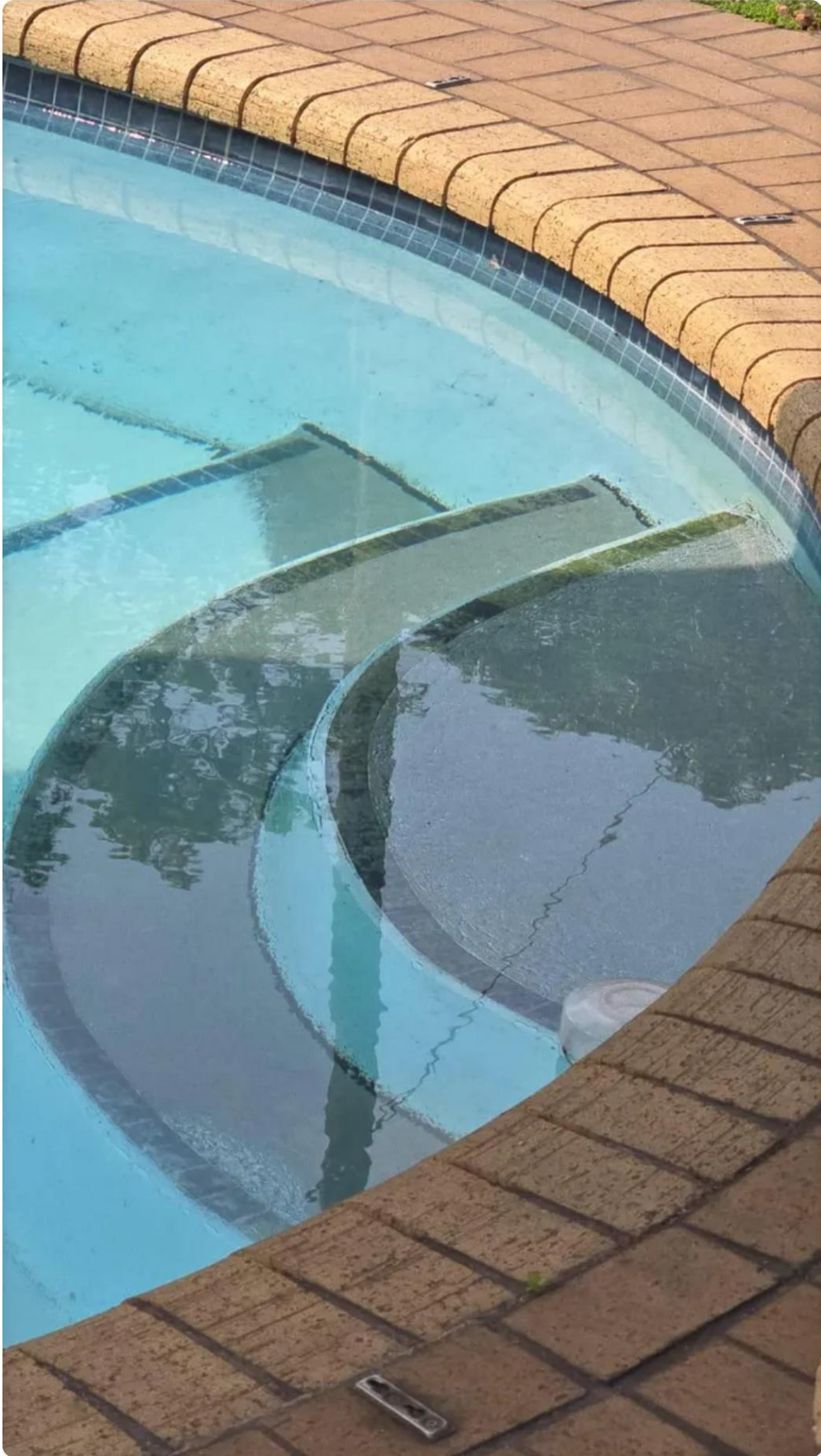
*Image: Supplied*

RICHARDS Bay residents are fighting a losing battle against pervasive coal dust from the port's storage terminal, forcing them to clean their homes multiple times daily while suffering from respiratory issues.

Despite repeated complaints to authorities, the community claims their concerns continue to be ignored.

Businessman and resident, Ishwar Ramlutchman, said the coal dust had been a problem for the past three years.

"The coal dust has greatly affected the community. We have to wash our vehicles and balconies daily. Residents are also forced to breathe in the coal dust daily. We have raised our concerns several times with the port authority and municipality, but they seemingly have no interest in dealing with this issue. Something needs to be done as the coal dust has a significant impact on the health and well-being of residents."



*In a swimming pool.*

*Image: Supplied*

Jackie Smit, who resides in Meerensee, said while the community was battling with air pollution as a result of the various industries, the coal dust remained the greatest concern.

“Our biggest pollution at the moment is coal dust. When we had a railway system, our town was not affected as much, but now the coal dust is everywhere. The grass and trees along the main road are covered in black dust. This affects our wildlife, because their main food source is being poisoned.

“We are also breathing in the dust, which is greatly affecting residents who have asthma or sinusitis. My husband and I both struggle with sinusitis. A few months ago he struggled with a cough, and had to eventually be nebulised three times a day. As a swim teacher, I have noticed more children are getting sick compared to before and often ending up in hospital,” she said.

Smit said she had reported it to the municipality.

“Although they have tried their best to get the coal trucks out of our town, it is still not solved.”

Asavela Wakudiashi Nyawo, who resides in Arboretum, said: “There is coal dust in the air most of the time and it’s difficult to breathe. Our chests always feel heavy and we feel miserable. How are we expected to live like this?

“Sadly, the authorities are not doing much to try and intervene in these matters that affect the community. I personally feel as the electorate, we elect our office bearers who are supposed to be fighting for us, even going to court and making sure that our people are well attended to,” she said.



*On indoor plants.  
Image: Supplied*

Sandy Camminga, founder and director of the Richards Bay Clean Air Association (RBCAA), said they had been inundated with complaints from residents who are being affected by the coal dust.

The RBCAA is a non-profit organisation established in 1997 due to community concerns regarding air pollution in Richards Bay. Its objectives are to monitor and predict ambient air quality within the uMhlathuze municipal area.

“The current air quality in terms of particulates (dust) can be considered as poor. Community complaints and supporting photographic evidence depicts a dire situation which requires immediate intervention by the regulatory authorities.

“Residents have said that the coal dust is not only affecting their health, but also their pets. They said their plants are suffering, suffocating and dying. Their houses are always covered with black coal dust no matter how much they clean. People are suffering with headaches, sinusitis, dizziness, scratchy eyes, and dry throat. They said they can actually feel the coal dust in their mouths.

“The residents said their children and grandchildren could not play outside otherwise they would be covered in coal dust. This is unacceptable and a violation of the municipality’s air quality by-laws,” she said.

The Transnet National Ports Authority and City of uMhlathuze did not respond at the time of publication.

#### **THE POST**

<https://iol.co.za/thepost/news/2025-09-25-coal-dust-pollution-plagues-richards-bay-residents/>