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Are wind farms being run by the mob?

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What is it with east coast wind farm development these days? I don't think I have come across a single news story about east coast wind development in the last three months that didn't involve some elements of corruption or intimidation. Aren't these mob tactics??

Take the case of Noble Environmental Power and First Wind, two of New York state's largest developers of wind power. Last Thursday the two companies agreed to follow a new, strict code of conduct that was developed by N.Y. state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo. The companies agreed to the code after coming under investigation over allegations that they "bribed and intimidated local officials to approve wind projects."

This comes after a four month investigation into the firms that began back in July when the attorney general's office began receiving complaints from community groups and citizens in upstate New York where the wind farms were being built. The investigation focuses on whether the wind companies used bribes to influence local officials into giving them permission to build wind towers, as well as whether companies colluded to divvy up territory in order to avoid bidding on the same pieces of land. Opponents of the wind farms say that they have received verbal threats, and one local activist reports having her windshield smashed in. Twice.

"We have no comment on specifics, but we want to be clear: Noble supports open and transparent development of wind projects in accordance with the

highest ethical standards,” said Walt Howard, Noble’s chief executive.

In a statement released by the attorney generals office Mr. Cuomo said that he expects the Wind Industry Ethics Code to reduce the threats and abuses in communities where wind farm development is taking place. “Wind power is an exciting industry for the state that will be a cornerstone of our energy future,” said Mr. Cuomo. “But it is important to make sure that this alternative energy sector develops in a way that maintains the public’s confidence, and that is what this new Code of Conduct does.”

A task force has been put in place to ensure that wind farm developers comply with the new code. It hearkens back to the days when the mob took an interest in construction racketeering and exploiting unions. It’s good to know that some things will never change. The mob may be gone but its tactics will live on forever. Even in the supposedly compassionate, caring world of alternative energy development.