

Healthy Air: Texas Should Reduce Toxic Mercury

Texas leads the nation in toxic mercury emissions from our coal-burning power plants. Reducing toxic emissions from these plants is crucial to protect our health, and especially the health of our children.

We call on the State of Texas to reduce toxic mercury emissions from all of Texas' coal-burning power plants to 10% of 2002 emissions by 2008. Utilities should not be allowed to buy their way out of mercury reductions through "trading" of credits, which can dangerously impact local communities and result in areas that are already suffering from mercury pollution not getting the clean up they so urgently need.

The Problem

- Texas' coal-burning power plants are the worst in the nation for toxic mercury, with 9815 pounds in 2002. Over 10% of the nation's mercury comes from Texas coal plants, and along with it come toxic arsenic, dioxin, lead and cadmium.
- Mercury in the air enters waterways, gets converted to methylmercury, and contaminates fish and wildlife. Human exposure is typically through eating contaminated fish and leads to permanent brain damage, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and attention deficits in children. For adults, there are increased cardiovascular risks and impaired ability to concentrate.
- Mercury contamination has made some species of fish unsafe to eat in 12 Texas water bodies, including major fishing lakes and the entire Gulf Coast.

The Solution

Support legislation that would reduce mercury emissions at all Texas coal-burning power plants to 10% of 2002 levels. Texas should opt out of national "trading" of toxic pollutants.

- Specific mercury controls to reduce pollution and health impacts have been tested – they work and are affordable, less than the cost of a cup of coffee per month for an average household. (\$.43 to \$1.29 per month for an average Texas household – National Wildlife Federation, Getting the Job Done, Oct. 2004)
- Texas can't afford either the human toll of mercury impacts on our children, or the resulting economic impacts of lost productivity due to loss of IQ in our children. (\$8.7 billion annually in the U.S.)

Mercury related bills in the Texas legislature - 2005:

YES on SB 1523 by Sen. Zaffirini and HB 2577 by Rep. Rodriguez to reduce toxic mercury emissions to 10% of 2002 levels at all coal-burning power plants in Texas.

YES on HB 1303 by Rep. Garnet Coleman, to test more fish for mercury and to better publicize fish consumption advisories.

YES: HB 1878 and HB 1879 by Rep. Farrar, to post mercury warning signs at seafood counters to test seafood from grocery stores.

YES: HB 1359 by Rep. Naishtat and SB 564 by Sen. Barrientos prohibiting the sale of electronic equipment containing mercury and other toxic compounds.