

Comments of Liz Scott – As Prepared for Delivery
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To

Environmental Protection Agency Public Hearing on Proposed Rule - National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Coal- and Oil-Fired Electric Utility Steam Generating Units Review of the Residual Risk and Technology Review
May 9, 2023

Hello, my name is Liz Scott and I'm the National Director of Advocacy for Healthy Air with the American Lung Association. I strongly support strengthening limits on mercury and air toxics from power plants and urge EPA to finalize at least the more stringent alternative limits included in the proposal.

The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards have been a huge success. First implemented in 2012, they have survived numerous legal challenges because of EPA's clear authority to regulate mercury and air toxics under the Clean Air Act, and the robust evidence showing that regulating these emissions is appropriate and necessary. The standards were fully implemented and responsible for driving dramatic reductions in toxic air pollution from power plants compared to previous levels. But the standards were first created over a decade ago and technology continues to evolve while the need to protect health from toxic emissions continues to be a priority. It's important that EPA review the technology and find ways where plants can further reduce emissions to improve health outcomes.

While we have made progress in cleaning up power plants, stronger standards are needed because power plants are still the largest domestic emitter of mercury. Mercury is particularly dangerous for babies and fetuses. It can permanently damage the brains of babies and unborn children, leading to developmental delays, learning disabilities and birth defects. Adults can also suffer from exposure, leading to coughing and chest pains, difficulty breathing, headaches, weakness or exhaustion and insomnia. Mercury can also seep into water supplies, increasing mercury levels in fish and other forms of nutrition. This poisoning of food is felt acutely by Native Americans who rely on local waters for sustenance and who, according to EPA's proposal, are more likely to live within 10 kilometers of a coal plant. I support EPA's proposal to revise the mercury standard for Lignite-fired electric generating units to a more stringent level to help lower the levels of mercury poisoning communities.

Finalizing the strongest possible standards is necessary to meet environmental justice commitments. Mercury is not the only threat that will be addressed by strong standards. Non-mercury hazardous air pollutant reductions are important targets of this proposal. We urge EPA to strengthen the proposed new limit on filterable PM to at least .006 pounds per million BTU, which will provide far more health benefits than the level proposed.

EPA's baseline analysis shows that among people living within 10 kilometers of coal plants, a higher percentage live two-times below the national poverty level average. Power plant emissions are most dangerous for communities living in close proximity – or on the 'fence-line' – of coal plants, although they can actually impact communities much further away as well. I was surprised to learn that currently, electric generating units could choose to not continuously monitor for hazardous air pollutants, opting

instead to take quarterly snapshots. Real time data from continuous monitoring is essential to protect public health, especially in these fenceline communities. The Lung Association strongly supports EPA's proposal to require continuous emissions monitoring for pollutants from all coal power generating units.

We're appreciative that EPA has acted with urgency to propose these standards after months of delay on the appropriate and necessary finding. We urge EPA to finalize the most health-protective standards by choosing the more stringent alternative limits for mercury and non-mercury hazardous air pollutants and to finalize this rule ideally by the end of 2023.