

EIP “TOXIC 10” REPORT: POWER PLANTS EMITTING MOST MERCURY ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY A FIFTH OF ALL SUCH POLLUTION

Overall Industry Mercury Emissions Down, But Progress Uneven at Worst Power Plants; TX is Home to 5 of 10 Worst Mercury-Emitting Plants, With the Rest in AL, MI, MO, ND and OK; Biggest Carcinogenic Metal Polluters in OH, KY, MI, PA, and WY.

AUSTIN, TX. & WASHINGTON, D.C.//January 3, 2013//Even though mercury and other hazardous air pollution from U.S. power plants are declining, the progress at the coal-fired power plants are uneven, leaving in place a significant remaining risk to the health of the public and environment, according to a new report by the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP).

Coal-burning power plants release millions of pounds of toxic pollutants into the air every year, including mercury and carcinogens like arsenic and chromium. US EPA’s Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) can be used to identify the largest sources of these dangerous pollutants based on annual reports the electric power industry submits to the Agency under federal Right to Know laws. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin, especially harmful to developing fetuses and young children.

Available online at http://environmentalintegrity.org/news_reports/01_03_2013.php, the new EIP report uses TRI data for 2011 (the most recent full year available) to identify the 10 largest sources of power plant mercury emissions – five of these are in Texas, of which four are owned by Luminant Generation:

1. Luminant Generation, Martin Lake Steam Electric Station & Lignite Mine in Rusk County, TX (1,501 lbs. of mercury emissions);
2. Southern Co., Gaston Steam Plant in Shelby, AL (1,244 lbs. of mercury emissions);
3. Luminant Generation, Big Brown Steam Electric Station & Lignite Mine in Freestone County, TX (1,240 lbs. of mercury emissions);
4. Luminant Generation, Monticello Steam Electric Station & Lignite Mine in Titus County, TX (911 lbs. of mercury emissions);
5. Luminant Generation, Sandow Steam Electric Station in Milam County, TX (841 lbs. of mercury emissions);
6. Great River Energy, Coal Creek Station in Mclean County, ND (812 lbs. of mercury emissions);
7. Ameren Corp., Ameren Missouri Labadie Energy Center in Franklin, MO (795 lbs. of mercury emissions);
8. Grand River Dam Authority, Grand River Coal Fired Complex in Mayes County, OK (722 lbs. of mercury emissions);
9. DTE Energy Co., Detroit Edison Monroe Power Plant in Monroe County, MI (708 lbs. of mercury emissions); and
10. American Electric Power, H.W. Pirkey Power Plant in Harrison County, TX (683 lbs. of mercury emissions).

Together, these 10 facilities account for about 18 percent of mercury emissions from all coal burning power plants nationwide in 2011. Mercury emissions at three of the top 10 plants (Big Brown, Labadie, and H.W. Pirkey) dropped at least 20 percent last year compared to 2010, but emissions increased or showed little change at the other seven.

The report also identifies the largest emitters of carcinogenic metals, which include arsenic, cobalt chromium, lead, and nickel. The five largest sources of such toxins are:

1. Consumers Energy, JH Campbell in Ottawa, MI (2,904 lbs. of chromium; 522 lbs. of cobalt; 2,458 lbs. of lead; 3,304 lbs. of nickel and 8,666 lbs. of metals total);
2. Basin Electric, Laramie River Station in Platte, WY (3,000 lbs. of arsenic; 2,507 lbs. of chromium; 750 of cobalt; 2,458 lbs. of lead; 2,204 lbs. of nickel; and 8,535 lbs. of metals total);

3. Tennessee Valley Authority, Paradise Fossil Plant in Muhlenberg, KY (1,505 lbs. of arsenic; 1,409 lbs. of chromium; 303 lbs. of cobalt; 1,907 lbs. of lead; 1,510 lbs. of nickel; and 6,634 lbs. of metals total);
4. American Electric Power, Conesville Plant in Coshocton, OH (525 lbs. of arsenic; 2,950 lbs. of chromium; 440 lbs. of cobalt; 452 lbs. of lead; 2,250 lbs. of nickel; and 6,617 lbs. of metals total); and
5. First Energy Generation Corp., Bruce Mansfield Power Plant in Beaver, PA (1,377 lbs. of arsenic; 2,310 lbs. of chromium; 500 lbs. of cobalt; 1,159 lbs. of lead; 1,578 lbs. of nickel; and 6,273 lbs. of metals total).

EIP Attorney Ilan Levin said: **“Nationwide, equipment has been installed over the years to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide and particulate matter. That has helped cut down on the release of mercury, toxic metals and acid gases from power plants over the last ten years. However, that progress is uneven, and the dirtiest plants continue to churn out thousands of pounds of toxins that can be hazardous to human health even in small concentrations. For example, emissions of mercury from coal-fired power plants have actually increased in the last decade in the state of Texas.**

Levin added, **“Emissions from local power plants deposit mercury and other toxic metals in nearby rivers and streams, where these pollutants concentrate in aquatic organisms at levels that can make fish unsafe to eat. The fact that so few plants are responsible for so much of the mercury pollution makes the solution less complicated; the dirtiest sources need to clean up their act.”**

METHODOLOGY

Information regarding the release of mercury, other toxic metals and acid gases was obtained through “TRI Explorer,” the database maintained by the U.S. EPA that compiles annual reports submitted to the Toxics Release Inventory by electric generators and other major industrial categories. See EPA, Toxics Release Inventory, available at <http://www.epa.gov/tri/>. The data submitted to the TRI is self-reported, and often based on estimates that may vary in their accuracy. The Agency relies upon multiple sources of information to determine current emission levels and develop appropriate limits, so the data reported to TRI will not necessarily match the projections that EPA relied upon in the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards rulemaking.

ABOUT EIP

The Environmental Integrity Project (<http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in March of 2002 by former EPA enforcement attorneys to advocate for effective enforcement of environmental laws. EIP has three goals: 1) to provide objective analyses of how the failure to enforce or implement environmental laws increases pollution and affects public health; 2) to hold federal and state agencies, as well as individual corporations, accountable for failing to enforce or comply with environmental laws; and 3) to help local communities obtain the protection of environmental laws.

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