



## Cleaner Air, Healthier People: Oppose Rollbacks of Toxic Mercury Emissions from Cement Plants

On September 9, 2010 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced air protections for more than 100 cement plants across the country. These standards will protect American families from uncontrolled emissions of mercury, hydrochloric acid and other toxic pollutants that cause cancer, brain damage, birth defects, and other serious disease.

### Health Benefits at a Glance

- The EPA estimates its cement plant standards will **prevent up to 2,500 premature deaths** each year and **save as much as \$18 billion** in health costs by reducing fine particulate matter emissions.
- These rules are long overdue: the EPA was required to set standards for cement plant pollution 13 years ago. Every year of delay has taken a toll on the American public in terms of lives and money.
- These standards also will drastically reduce emissions of mercury, hydrochloric acid, hydrocarbons, and sulfur dioxide, yielding public health benefits that haven't even been quantified by the EPA.
- EPA has estimated that, due to mercury pollution, more than 60,000 American babies born every year are at risk of suffering from learning disability and developmental damage.<sup>1</sup> Cleaning up mercury from cement kilns – the third largest source of toxic mercury in the U.S. – is a crucial step in protecting children from developmental damage and restoring the health of our waters so fish are safe to eat.



### The Technology is Here Now and Industry Can Afford It

- Clean air technologies for cement kilns are available right now. American companies build this equipment, and American workers will be the ones who install, operate and maintain it.
- Cement companies have ample resources to clean up their toxic pollution. Two of the largest cement producers in America, the French company Lafarge and the Swiss company Holcim, will report net income over \$1 billion in 2010.<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 80 percent of cement manufacturing capacity in America is owned by large foreign companies. For 13 years, these companies have gotten a free pass to maximize their profits by dodging pollution control requirements.
- Contrary to claims made by industry and its allies, the EPA's cement plant standards will not kill jobs. EPA has estimated that the net effect of its rule on jobs is likely to be positive and that the rule could create as many as 1,300 new jobs.

<sup>1</sup>"Toxicological Effects of Methyl-mercury." National Academy of Sciences, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter financial filings for Lafarge and Holcim.

- EPA's rules will not take effect for three years, and the Clean Air Act authorizes state permitting authorities to provide an extra year – to September, 2014 – to companies that need more time to install controls.
- Cement plant operators won't have to pay to clean up all at once. They will amortize the cost of pollution controls over many years.

### **EPA's Standards Will Reduce Pollutants That Harm Human Health**

- **Mercury** is a dangerous neurotoxicant that impairs a child's ability to learn, write, walk, talk and read.
- **Hydrocarbons, lead, arsenic, dioxins, and benzene** are hazardous air pollutants emitted by cement plants that can cause cancer, birth defects, and other catastrophic health damage. Reducing emissions of these dangerous substances will protect public health.
- **Fine particulate matter** (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) causes and exacerbates respiratory and cardiac problems. The EPA projects that reducing cement plants' PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions will prevent every year:
  - 1,000 emergency room visits
  - 1,500 heart attacks
  - 17,000 cases of aggravated asthma
  - 32,000 cases of upper and lower respiratory symptoms
  - 130,000 days when people must miss work

### **Details of the Reductions**

The EPA estimates their rule will result in the following reductions:

- **Mercury:** 16,600 pounds per year, a reduction of 92 percent
- **Total hydrocarbons:** 10,600 tons, a reduction of 83 percent
- **Particulate matter:** 11,500 tons, a reduction 92 percent
- **Hydrochloric acid:** 5,800 tons, or a reduction of 97 percent
- **Sulfur dioxide:** 110,000 tons, a reduction of 78 percent

### **Economic Benefits**

- The EPA has estimated that reducing fine particulate matter pollution alone will yield between \$6.7 and \$18 billion every year in health savings. This substantially outweighs the projected costs of the rule to the cement industry, which totals less than \$350 million per year for all one hundred plants.
- Even these modest costs are likely to be overstated, as EPA routinely overestimates the costs of its regulations.<sup>3</sup>

### **For more information, contact**

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<sup>3</sup> "How Accurate Are Regulatory Cost Estimates?" Winston Harrington, et al., Resources for the Future. March 5, 2010.