

TO SIGN ON: Contact Shelley Vinyard, Shelley@environmentamerica.org, 202-461-2465

ATTN: Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0234

Dear EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson,

As members of the environmental and public health communities, we write to applaud you for your proposed Mercury and Air Toxics Rule, which significantly cuts toxic air pollution from power plants. As you work to finalize this rule, we urge you to keep the final rule just as strong as the proposed version.

Our families should be able to breathe clean air and drink clean water -- without worrying about mercury in their bloodstream, soot in their lungs, or lead in their water.

Yet coal-fired power plants spew hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous air pollutants like these into our air and water every year. These pollutants are linked to cancer, heart disease, neurological damage, birth defects, asthma attacks and even premature death. When coal-fired power plants emit mercury from their smokestacks, rain, snow, and dust particles wash it out of the air, onto land, into waterways, and ultimately into our food chain. Mercury pollution poses particular risks to children, affecting their ability to walk, talk, read, and write, and it is so widespread that as many as one in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her blood to put her baby at risk, should she become pregnant. Moreover, low-income and minority communities often bear a greater burden of the effects of toxic pollution from power plants, as they live closer to the polluting facilities than most Americans.

Because mercury is the most common contaminant in fish in the U.S., every state has set some sort of fish advisory due to unsafe levels of the toxic pollutant. Wildlife that is exposed to mercury may die or, depending upon the level of exposure, have reduced fertility or complete reproductive failure, as well as slower growth and development, and other vulnerabilities. High levels of mercury have been found in species at every level in the food chain, threatening many different species, including the common loon in Maine and the endangered Florida panther.

Coal-fired power plants are the single largest source of mercury pollution, arsenic and acid gases, and account for 25 percent of all toxic metal emissions in the United States. Furthermore, coal-fired power plants are responsible for 99 percent of all mercury emissions from the power sector in the United States.

For decades, the coal industry has used its undue influence on decision makers to delay implementation of strong standards to cut this dangerous, toxic air pollution from its facilities, going so far as to work with Bush administration officials to set a severely flawed and illegal standard that had few, if any, actual health benefits.

We are thrilled you and your agency have finally proposed a strong standard that will for the first time cut mercury emissions from power plants nationwide by 91 percent, reduce arsenic and acid gases by 91 percent, prevent 12,200 trips to the hospital, and save up to 17,000 lives each year once it is implemented.

We applaud you for this strong standard and urge you to keep it just as strong in the final version of the Mercury and Air Toxics Rule. We look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,