

GET THE FACTS:

MERCURY IS TOXIC

COAL PLANTS EMIT MERCURY POLLUTION

Coal-fired power plants are one of the largest sources of pollution in our country. They emit thousands of pounds of toxic mercury pollution every year, as well as arsenic, lead and acid gases, putting families at risk.

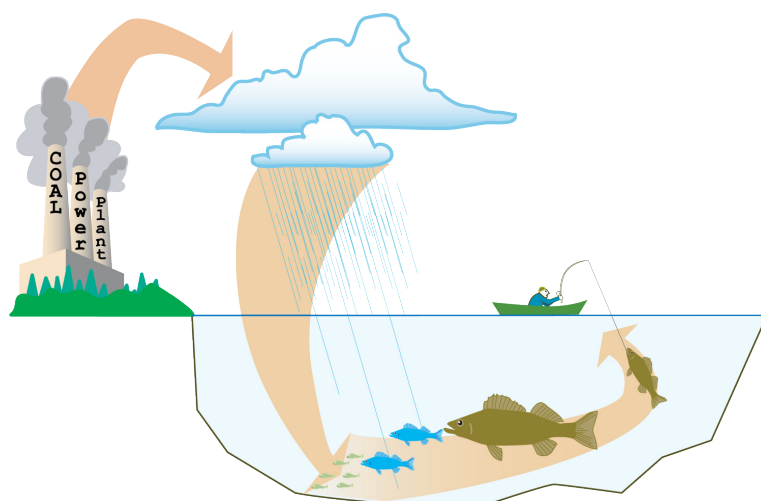
Approximately 48 tons of toxic mercury are being pumped into our air each year from coal fired power plants, which comprise the largest domestic source of federally unregulated mercury pollution in the United States.¹

A recent report by Environment America analyzing data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxics Release Inventory found that coal-fired power plants in the U.S. emitted more than 130,000 pounds of toxic mercury pollution in the year 2009, alone.²

Toxic mercury is released into the air and then rains down into our lakes, streams, and other waters. Mercury in water is converted into the most toxic form (methylmercury) by aquatic organisms, which are eaten by fish. Mercury accumulates in fish tissues, poisoning them and the animals that eat them, causing death, reduced fertility and reproductive failure.

MERCURY POLLUTION MAKES US SICK

Mercury can also make its way to our dinner tables via contaminated fish. Once ingested, mercury acts as a potent neurotoxin and can cause damage to the brain and nervous system.



Pregnant women and children are at greatest risk from mercury exposure, especially if they consume large amounts of fish and seafood. Exposure to mercury in utero can contribute to birth defects including neurological and developmental disorders, learning disabilities, delayed onset of walking and talking, and cerebral palsy.³

At least 1 in 12, and as many as 1 in 6 American women have enough mercury in their bodies to put a baby at risk.⁴ That means that over 300,000 babies are born each year at risk of mercury poisoning.⁵

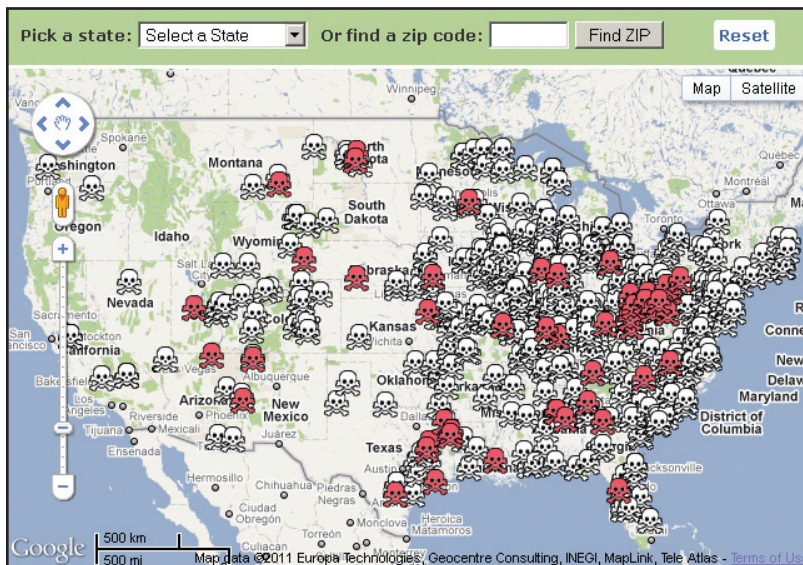
3 Committee on the Toxicological Effects of Methylmercury, Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology, National Research Council. Toxicological Effects of Methylmercury. (National Academy Press, 2000)

4 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.epa.gov/mercury/exposure.htm>.

5 Blood Organic Mercury and Dietary Mercury Intake: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; Environmental Health Perspectives, Kathryn R. Mahaffey, Robert P. Clickner, Catherine C. Bodurow, April 2004

1 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Mercury Study Report to Congress, Volume II: An Inventory of Anthropogenic Mercury Emissions in the United States. EPA-452/R-97-003. (December 1997).

2 "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," Environment America, January 26, 2011, <http://environmentamerica.org/reports/toxics-free-communities/stop-toxic-pollution/dirty-energys-assault-on-our-health-mercury>



Toxic Mercury Pollution Map

Current Status
 491 coal-fired plants emit **78,367 lbs.** of toxic mercury each year (Less than one teaspoon of mercury can contaminate an entire lake.)

Plant Data
 Click on a plant on the map to get more information about it.

Legend/Filter
 🦠 Biggest Offenders
 🦠 Mercury Polluters

Find this mapping tool¹ and more information at www.sierraclub.org/mercury

1 Swain, E.B., et al., 1992, "Increasing Rates of Atmospheric Mercury Deposition in Midcontinental North America", Science, 257: 784-787

MERCURY POLLUTION CONTAMINATES OUR WATER

Today, our waterways are so polluted that nearly all fish contain traces of mercury. However, fish that are at the top of the food chain, like swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tilefish pose the greatest risk to our health, because more mercury accumulates in their bodies.

Federal, state and local governments across the United States regularly identify waterways that are contaminated with unsafe levels of mercury by issuing fish advisories—which encourage people to limit fish consumption from polluted areas.

As of 2008, 50 states, one U.S. territory, and three tribes had issued mercury advisories. Eighty percent of all advisories in effect in 2008 were issued, at least in part, because of mercury. In 2008, there were 16.8 million lake acres and 1.3 million river miles under advisory for mercury. This represents an increase of 19 percent for lake acres and 42 percent for river miles from 2006 levels. The increase was largely driven by new, statewide mercury advisories in Idaho, Oregon, and Wyoming.⁶

Nationally, the EPA recommends that Americans concerned about mercury limit their fish consumption to no more than 12 oz. of fish with lower mercury levels (e.g., shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish) per week. The EPA recommends that women and young children generally abstain from shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury. For locally caught fish when

6 U.S. EPA, National Listing of Fish Advisories: Technical Factsheet. US EPA, Office of Water. EPA-823-F-09-007. (September 2009). Available at: <http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/fishadvisories/tech2008.cfm>

mercury levels are unknown, EPA advises no more than 6 ounces per week.⁷

WE NEED STRONG EPA MERCURY PROTECTIONS

Powering our homes should not poison our families and foul our water.

There is a cure for this crisis—the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can help clean up our air and water and protect our kids' health by enacting protections against mercury and other air pollution.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA can implement safeguards to limit Americans' exposure to extremely harmful air pollutants called "air toxics." Air toxics include mercury, arsenic, lead, dioxin, and acid gases. Even in small amounts these are linked to cancer, mutations, neurological damage and other serious health problems.

In 2011, the EPA is expected to propose an updated protection called the "Power Plant Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT)" standard.

This move by the EPA to protect public health will save lives, prevent disease and avoid hospitalizations, while creating new jobs building and installing air pollution control equipment.

It's impossible to put a price on our children's health. We need the Environmental Protection Agency to enact a strong Air Toxics safeguard to protect our children's health from mercury.

7 U.S. FDA and U.S. EPA brochure, What You Need to Know about Mercury in Fish and Shellfish: Advice for Women Who Might Become Pregnant, Women Who are Pregnant, Nursing Mothers, Young Children <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/files/MethylmercuryBrochure.pdf>