

Clean Air Standards Will Cut Toxic Air Pollution from Industrial Plants and Save More Than 5,000 Lives Each Year

On June 4, 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed emissions standards to control toxic air pollution from large equipment called boilers at industrial plants. Boilers burn various fuels to produce steam that then is used to generate electricity or heat for industrial operations. The EPA's proposed standards, once finalized, will require these boilers to limit toxic air pollutants including mercury, lead, arsenic, formaldehyde, benzene, dioxins, and acid gases.

Thirty-six million Americans live within three miles of an industrial plant and the toxic air pollution emitted by boilers. Limiting this toxic air pollution is expected to save more than 5,000 lives annually. The EPA's proposed standards will further reduce pollution that is known to cause severe adverse health effects, including cancer and brain damage in children. Americans need and deserve these vital health protections.

Significantly, the reduction of toxic air pollution from boilers will produce health benefits that exceed cleanup costs by billions of dollars. The EPA estimates that the *health benefits will outweigh the costs of regulation by at least \$14 billion every year.*

Toxic Air Pollution from Boilers is Deadly

More than 20 different toxic air pollutants are emitted by industrial boilers, with very serious health consequences for Americans.

- **Mercury** and **lead** are harmful to children's brains; exposure can lead to developmental problems and learning disabilities.
- **Arsenic** and **chromium** are known to cause cancer.
- **Benzene** is toxic to the immune system, produces blood and reproductive disorders, and may lead to respiratory paralysis, coma, or death.
- **Hydrogen cyanide** damages the lungs, heart, and central nervous system.
- **Toxic particles** lodge deep in the lungs, causing strokes, heart attacks, and premature death.

The EPA's Proposal Promises Enormous Health Benefits

Reducing toxic air pollution from industrial plants will save lives and make Americans healthier.

- The EPA estimates that implementing its proposed rule will avoid up to 5,100 premature deaths, 3,000 heart attacks, and 35,000 asthma attacks every year.
- In addition to removing tens of thousands of tons of toxic air pollution from the air every year, the standards will reduce sulfur dioxide pollution (a cause of acid rain) by 340,000 tons, and particulate matter (linked to decreased lung function, heart attacks, and premature death) by 50,000 tons per year.

For more information,
please contact
John Walke
Director, Clean Air Project
(202) 289-2406
jwalke@nrdc.org



Clean Air Standards Will Cut Toxic Air Pollution from Industrial Plants and Save More Than 5,000 Lives Each Year

Congress Required the EPA to Set Standards for Toxic Air Pollution

In the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act, Congress established a list of toxic air pollutants and directed the EPA to regulate major sources of this pollution. Industrial boilers emit more than 20 of the listed toxic air pollutants.

The EPA first issued standards for toxic air pollution from industrial boilers in 2004, after years of delay. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit overturned these standards for violating the Clean Air Act, and sent them back to the EPA for correction.

Pursuant to a court order, the EPA must issue final emission standards for toxic air pollution from boilers by January 16, 2011. The EPA solicited comments on its proposed emissions standards. The EPA's final standards may change as a consequence of public and industry input. The EPA should establish standards for toxic air pollution from industrial plants that are protective of human health.