Cement's Toxic Legacy: IOWA

CONGRESSIONAL ATTACKS ON HEALTH PROTECTIONS

Cement manufacturers are dumping their pollution into Iowa communities with impunity. Lives are lost every year from this pollution, and our economy is forced to bear the burden of billions of dollars spent on hospital visits, lost days at work, and sick Iowans who are breathing this toxic air pollution.

In August 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at last adopted strong air pollution protections for more than 100 cement making facilities across the country, bringing pollution controls for this industry into compliance with Clean Air Act requirements that have been on the books since 1990. The protections make significant cuts in mercury, soot and other dangerous air toxics. The EPA estimates that the pollution cuts from these updates will prevent up to **2,500 premature deaths each year and yield up to $18 billion in health benefits**.

But some members of Congress don't value saving lives and money and instead are carrying the demands of huge multinational cement companies that want to avoid cleaning up their toxic legacy. **H.J. Res. 42** would block the EPA's new requirement that these cement plants finally control their toxic air pollution with state-of-the-art pollution control technologies. A list of Iowa cement kilns and their emissions of toxic mercury pollution is below.[1]

Company	City	County	Kilns	Capacity (tons/yr)	Baseline Hg Emissions[2] (lbs/yr)
Holcim	Mason City	Cerro Gordo	2/dry	896,000	190
Lafarge	Buffalo	Scott	1/dry	975,000	131
Lehigh	Mason City	Cerro Gordo	1/dry	731,000	86

THE DANGERS OF MERCURY

Mercury poisoning is a serious threat to our health. While adults can have severe reactions to mercury poisoning – typically brought about by consumption of fish tainted with

methylmercury, a highly toxic mercury compound – young children and unborn babies are especially at risk. This is why women are strongly cautioned to avoid consumption of many kinds of fish before, during, or right after pregnancy. Exposure to methylmercury while still young or in the womb can have an irreversible impact on a child's development, including birth defects, brain damage, reduced IQ, and difficulty with reading, writing, and learning.

The EPA estimates that **more than 300,000 babies are born every year with an increased risk of learning disability due to *in utero* exposure to methylmercury.**[3] Cement plants are among the worst mercury polluters. The EPA's recently finalized health protections will reduce cement plants' mercury emissions by more than 90 percent – in addition to dramatic cuts in other pollutants that impact our health such as lead, acid gases, and soot. We urge you to defend these health protections from efforts by your colleagues to block them from ever taking effect. Iowa moms are counting on it.

FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has issued a number of fish consumption advisories due to methylmercury contamination in the state's waters. Specifically, the DNR cautions against consumption of largemouth bass from Lake Geode, Mormon Trail Lake, Nine Eagles Lake, North Banner Lake, and South Banner Lake. Additionally, consumption advisories exist for a number of fish species in stretches of the Mississippi, Cedar, Upper Iowa, and Volga Rivers.[4]

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[1] Data regarding company, city, number of kilns and capacity comes from the Portland Cement Association's "U.S. and Canadian Portland Cement Industry: Plant Information Summary," Dec. 31, 2008. Accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

[2] Emissions data come from U.S. EPA Impacts Worksheet for 40 CFR Parts 60 and 63 "National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants From the Portland Cement Manufacturing Industry." For further explanation of baseline mercury emissions, see p. 9 of the EPA's summary of environmental and cost impacts for the rule: http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/pcem/summary_impacts.pdf

[3] http://www.epa.gov/hg/exposure.htm

[4] http://www.iowadnr.gov/fish/news/consump.html