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Coal Power Plants in Chicago



Coal burning power plants are a major source of air pollution and global warming emissions in the United States, and especially in Chicago. The pollutants that come from power plants cause respiratory problems, lung disease, and even neurological damage.

Existing power plants, like Crawford and Fisk, were ‘grandfathered’ by the federal government and are subject to more lenient pollution standards because of their age. The Crawford plant was originally built in 1924 and the Fisk plant was built in 1903. While these plants have been upgraded over the last century, and while these plants have more relaxed standards than most, they still blatantly and repeatedly exceed their air pollution standards.

Chicago ranks as the second hardest hit city in the entire country for the impacts of power plant pollution. According to the 2001 Harvard School of Public Health Study, the estimated impacts of the two Chicago power plants, Crawford and Fisk, are:

40+ premature deaths per year
2800 asthma attacks per year
500 emergency room visits per year

What comes out of a power plant:

Sulfur Dioxides (SO₂)
Particulate Matter
(Soot)
Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)
Mercury (Hg)
Nitrous Oxides (NO_x)

How it hurts people:

Asthma
Severe Respiratory Problems
Lung Disease and Damage
Neurological Damage
Risk of Heart Complications
Missed Work/School
Lost Income

How it hurts communities:

Acid Rain
Haze/Smog
Global Warming
Toxic Fish
Higher Health Costs

While the pollutants and related side affects are left behind in Chicago, the electricity is actually sent out of the city to buyers throughout the Midwest.

In fact, 30% of all electricity produced in Illinois is exported to other states, essentially making

Illinois an ashtray for power plant pollution.

It's time to move beyond coal



Refusing to tolerate repeated violations any longer, a coalition of environmental and health groups announced in the summer of 2009, their filing of a 60-day notice of intent to sue Midwest Generation, the first step in a Clean Air Act citizen suit against the company.

The U.S. Justice Department added its voice to the issue shortly following this announcement, filing a lawsuit against Midwest Generation on behalf of the U.S. EPA and the Illinois Attorney General's Office, alleging that the company has been violating, and continues to violate, the Clean Air Act.

A broad coalition of environmental and health groups announce their intent to sue Midwest Generation for their repeated violations of the Clean Air Act.

Moving toward a clean energy economy is essential to the health of Chicagoans, the health of our planet and the well being of our economy. We need to transition away from old dirty coal fired power plants as a source of our electricity toward a clean energy future. Such a future will utilize energy efficiency technologies and renewable energy options, such as wind, solar and geothermal to meet our energy needs.

A clean energy economy is possible for Chicagoland and Illinois. With the implementation of the City of Chicago's Climate Action Plan, the development of the 10,000 potential megawatts of wind in Illinois, the suitability and placement of Illinois' electric grid for moving electricity in the midwest, and the strong manufacturing base throughout the state, Chicago and Illinois will be a leader in the move toward a clean energy economy.

Good green jobs will be created through this transition to a clean energy economy. In Illinois alone, if national carbon reduction goals are set at 25% reduction by 2025, over 56,000 jobs could be created through new manufacturing facilities catering to wind, solar, geothermal and biomass companies. (Clean Energy Economy Report, Blue Green Alliance, June 2009).

To get more involved in Chicago area Energy Issues, go to <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Chicago/> for meeting times, event announcements and volunteer opportunities.



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