



The Trump Administration is Attacking Important Mercury Safeguards

Former coal lobbyist and EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler's effort to roll back the foundation for the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) is more than an abhorrent policy decision to privilege polluter profits over the health of pregnant women, young children, and the elderly—it's part of a methodical scheme to allow a handful of wealthy coal mining executives to attack it in court.

The MATS protect the public from mercury, arsenic, hydrochloric acid, and a variety of other air pollutants, which are especially harmful to vulnerable populations like infants and mothers. **The EPA estimates that the MATS prevent up to 11,000 premature deaths and more than 100,000 asthma attacks and heart attacks each year.**

It also provides massive benefits—such as protecting children from lifelong neurological damage—that the EPA has yet to fully quantify.

After these lifesaving protections were finalized, almost every electric utility in the U.S. installed pollution control equipment to comply with the new standards. As a result, mercury pollution from power plants has dropped precipitously. Representatives for the electric utility industry have asked EPA to keep the standards in place, mainly because utilities have already made the financial investments to comply.

Despite these pleas, however, Andrew Wheeler and his air policy chief, Bill Wehrum, both of whom are long-term

representatives of industrial polluters, are now planning to change the EPA's analysis of the MATS to make it easier for a handful of coal executives that supported Trump's presidential bid to attack the standards in court. Wheeler and Wehrum's analysis would ignore the vast majority of MATS' public-health benefits, making it far less sound than the EPA's prior analysis that included them. This would encourage coal industry lawyers to argue to the federal courts that the MATS should be wholly eliminated.

The new analysis would also decisively tilt the EPA's cost-benefit analyses in favor of polluters and against public health. But any cost-benefit analysis that ignores all the benefits of keeping toxic pollution away from American families is deeply flawed. That's why public health officials, environmentalists, and community activists immediately condemned the move as one that would threaten the health gains achieved through the MATS.

Any sensible person would recognize these basic protections for pregnant women and young children are already working, and that undermining them is a direct attack on their health and development. But **Wheeler and Wehrum are putting the interests of their former employers before logic and before the health of American children.** They are trying to permanently weaken the EPA's ability to protect the public so that polluters can make more money. It's shameful, and we must stop them.

Sierra Club National
2101 Webster Street, Suite 1300
Oakland, CA 94612
(415) 977-5500

Sierra Club Legislative
50 F Street, NW, Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 547-1141

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