



Our Children's Earth Foundation | 100 First Street, Suite 100-367, San Francisco, CA 94105

NEWS RELEASE

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BUSH ADMINISTRATION MUST UPDATE CLEAN AIR STANDARDS FOR NEW POWER PLANTS

New Agreement Forces EPA to Protect Communities from Air Pollution

Oakland, CA --- New power plants will have to meet stricter clean air standards, thanks to a court decree filed today that settles a lawsuit filed by two environmental groups against the Bush administration. According to the decree, the Bush administration must develop and enforce stronger pollution control standards for new power plants within two years. This will have important consequences for the flood of new power plants expected to be constructed over the next decade. At the same time, the groups vowed to continue fighting the Bush Administration over its recent weakening of clean air standards at the oldest and dirtiest power plants and factories across the country.

Our Children's Earth Foundation (OCE) and Sierra Club sued EPA in February of 2003 because EPA has failed to update pollution standards for new power plants as required by the federal Clean Air Act. EPA has not updated the standards, allowing new power plants to use 20-year old technology. This lapse has allowed new power plants to spew hundreds of thousands of tons of additional pollutants into the air that new technology could have prevented, including toxic mercury that then falls into waterways and poisons fish and people.

"This is an important decree," said Tiffany Schauer, Executive Director of Our Children's Earth. "Until EPA reviews and updates these standards, new power plants across the country are being built without modern pollution controls. Some of these rules haven't been reviewed for more than 20 years."

"This decree means that millions of Americans will breathe easier and enjoy cleaner waters, as proven new technologies are required to be put in place on newly constructed power plants. This consent decree will move us away from the Bush Administration's backward policy and toward cleaner, healthier air and water," said Pat Gallagher, Director of Environmental Law for the Sierra Club.

According to the consent decree, EPA must immediately evaluate and establish more stringent limits on pollutants like particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide in light of technological advances in pollution control technology. EPA's delay also has meant that emissions standards for other harmful pollutants like mercury have not been updated, despite

considerable advances in pollution technology, and in scientific research showing a clear link between air pollution and human health.

Multiple studies show that air pollution causes disease and premature deaths and increases the frequency and severity of asthma attacks. A recent study in Florida shows that ratcheting down on mercury air pollution results in cleaner waterways and a reduction in mercury poisoning of fish.

EPA now must propose new emission limits for power plants within one year, and issue final regulations within two years.

Sources:

- A decade-long study of southern Florida and the Everglades found that tough regulations of mercury air pollution almost immediately helped remove the toxic pollutant from the environment and the food chain. Florida Department of Environmental Protection, "Integrating Atmospheric Mercury Deposition with Aquatic Cycling in South Florida" (2003).
- In Chicago, a 2002 Harvard study found that the area's nine grandfathered coal plants cause 21,500 asthma attacks and 315 premature deaths every year. Levy, JI., Spengler, J.D., Hlinka, D., Sullivan, D., Moon, D., 2002. "Using CALPUFF to evaluate the impacts of power plant emissions in Illinois: model sensitivity and implications." *Atmospheric Environment* 36(6) 1063-1075.
- Another recent study published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, entitled "The Impact of Air Pollution on Infant Mortality: Evidence from Geographic Variation in Pollution Shocks Induced by a Recession," indicates that air pollution has inflicted a heavy toll on infant health.
- See also "Asthma in exercising children exposed to ozone: a cohort study," *Lancet*, 359:386-91 (2002) and "Effects of Air Pollutants on Acute Stroke Mortality," *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 110:187-91 (2002).

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