

AIR POLLUTION DEREGULATION: A GIANT STEP BACKWARD

A Report from the Executive Director

We the people have a growing understanding of the dangers of deregulation—irresponsible, negligent deregulation. Now here comes the North Carolina Division of Air Quality with a proposal to deregulate more than 1,400 big air pollution sources. And they are using sleight-of-hand tricks to mask the harm.

On Tuesday October 28, 2008 in Raleigh the NC Environmental Management Commission will hear comments on this proposal to gut the health-based standards which have been in effect for decades. If adopted, the exemption would remove forever the requirement that industrial boilers limit air poisons at the property boundary. These boilers include coal-fired power plants, asphalt plants, paper mills and more. The poisons which these plants would never have to limit include arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde, hydrogen sulfide and more than a hundred others.

DAQ has added insult to potential injury by justifying the boiler exemption with a large human exposure study. The fatal flaw in the study is the use of an EPA computer model which measures inhalation only. For nearly twenty years the hardworking Science Advisory Board has conducted detailed analyses of air poisons to create the existing toxic air pollutant rules. The SAB sets specific limits for each toxin based on human exposure through every pollution pathway: water, soil and ingestion as well as inhalation. Toxic compounds deposited on soil, plants and water may be metabolized by microorganisms and ingested by fish, other animals and humans. Fat-soluble bio-accumulative substances concentrate in dairy products.

I repeat: the Human Exposure Model estimates risk from inhalation only. It cannot capture the health risks posed by, for example, formaldehyde, which is water soluble. The HEM under-reports the health impacts of dioxin—the world's most dangerous poison. People living near smokestacks must be protected from the ingestion of dioxin.

The state's study tells only a piece of the truth, the effect of which is a lie. The lie is that these industrial boilers are safe.

The question is obvious: why would anyone propose this exemption at all? The answer is also obvious: coal plants, asphalt plants, paper mills and others cannot now meet the pollution limits. We say if they can not meet these health-protective standards, the companies need to add pollution controls.

Moreover, the DAQ's cost-benefit analysis which underlies the economic hardship loophole fails to take into account the costs to families of emergency room visits, missed work and school, health insurance, medicines and equipment, and chronic conditions.

We community organizers know that the people must lead. League members and concerned North Carolinians are going to Raleigh on October 28th to stand up for health-protective pollution limits and to say *No* to this dangerous deregulation.

Janet Marsh, Executive Director

***One person speaking alone may not be heard.
Many people speaking with one voice cannot be ignored.***

NC Environmental Management Commission

Public Hearing

October 28, 2008

7:00 PM

NC Division of Air Quality
Parker-Lincoln Building, Room AQ-526
2728 Capital Blvd. Raleigh, NC 27604

The NC DAQ is located at Exit 11 on I-440, the Raleigh Beltline.
Complete directions to the hearing are posted at
http://daq.state.nc.us/motor/ms_grants/direct.shtml

Written comment deadline is December 1, 2008
Submit comments to Michael Abraczinskas, Division of Air Quality,
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