

# *Reality Check*

## *Regulating Mercury Emissions In Pennsylvania*

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### **Is the Health of Pennsylvania's Children at Risk From Mercury in Power Plant Emissions?**

#### **Some Groups Claim:**

- Mercury emissions from power plants put the health of women of childbearing age at risk and may increase developmental disorders in children and that one in six women of childbearing age has so much mercury in her body that her nursing infant or fetus is in danger of brain damage.

#### **The REALITY is:**

- The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) conducted a nationwide study of women of childbearing age, infants and young children and found not a single case where mercury levels approached the level that might cause adverse health effects.

The Japanese eat far more fish than Americans. According to a 2004 study published in the *Journal of Health Science*, 87 percent of Japan's population -- including 74 percent of Japanese women of childbearing age -- have mercury in their bloodstreams above EPA's reference dose (which is 10 times lower than the Benchmark Dose, the point at which health effects might be caused). Japanese children routinely outscore American children on standardized tests.

- According to the Department of Environmental Protection, the health threat posed by mercury emissions is indirect. It comes from eating fish that contains mercury, not from breathing mercury emissions in the air around us.

In fact, 80 percent of the mercury consumed in fish in the United States comes from eating saltwater fish like tuna, cod and swordfish, not freshwater fish.

- [Dr. Jack Snyder, an M.D. and Toxicologist](#) from the Annapolis Center for Science-Based Public Policy, has reviewed the relevant literature and concluded in testimony before the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee that—

The Committee has “not been provided credible evidence supporting speculation that any women, children, or fetuses have been harmed, or have been placed at increased risk of harm, as a result of eating fish obtained from bodies of water in Pennsylvania or other parts of the United States.”

“The recent increase in the number of fish advisories is due to an increase in the number of mercury measurements in fish, and not due to an increase in levels of mercury in fish or in the environment”

*Note: In addition to being a registered physician in Pennsylvania, Dr. Snyder spent 15 years on the faculty of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.*

- [Dr. Donald J. McGraw, M.D.](#), an expert in occupational and environmental medicine from Pittsburgh invited by DEP to address the Mercury Rule Work Group said this—

“Studies of people eating lots of fish in other cultures do not show adverse health consequences. There is a huge benefit to eating fish and it would be an unfortunate tradeoff to reduce the consumption of fish for health effects we haven’t seen.”

“The atmospheric levels of mercury breathed in the air of our general environment are very low and do not represent an adverse human health risk.”

“There is no current medical information to support any changes in dietary recommendations or environmental health practices other than relying upon those standards in place as reasonable guidelines.”

*Note: Dr. McGraw was on the faculty at John Hopkins University for several years and the University of Pittsburgh for more than 20 and has been the Director of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at both Presbyterian University Hospital and Shadyside Hospital where he regularly evaluated patients for the past 25 years.*

- **How Much Fish Could I Eat?** A 160 pound person would have to eat 22.8 pounds of catfish or 15.5 pounds of freshwater trout a week, each week, over an entire lifetime to even approach the Benchmark Dose Limit safety level established by the EPA, which is the point at which EPA believes health risks might occur.

## **Support Serious Mercury Reductions**

Senate Bill 1201 and House Bill 2610 would require an 86 percent reduction in mercury emissions from Pennsylvania coal-fired power plants without impacting the economic well-being of the Commonwealth. These bills are supported by a coalition of business, labor and coal industry groups that believe we can reduce mercury emissions and protect Pennsylvania jobs. The coalition supporting this approach includes the:

United Mine Workers of America	Pennsylvania Chamber of Business & Industry
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	Pennsylvania Chemical Industry Council
Pennsylvania Coal Association	Electric Power Generation Association
Associated Petroleum Industries of Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association

For more information visit the [www.PaEnergyNews.com](http://www.PaEnergyNews.com) website.

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