

Reality Check

Regulating Mercury Emissions In Pennsylvania

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Will “Cap and Trade” Significantly Reduce Mercury Emissions in PA?

DEP Says:

- A “cap and trade” system will not result in reducing mercury emissions in Pennsylvania because nothing forces the installation of mercury control equipment.

The REALITY is:

- DEP itself said that 90 percent of the electric generating capacity in Pennsylvania will install advanced air pollution reduction controls in response to the federal Clean Air Interstate Rule that will reduce mercury, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions.
- The federal Clean Air Mercury Rule (CAMR) requires Pennsylvania to reduce mercury emissions from electric generating units 64 percent by 2010, and to a total of 86 percent by 2018. The reductions required by this rule are simply too great for an electric generator to achieve solely by buying credits from other power plants.
- DEP’s own proposed regulation includes an “allowance” system that would allow DEP to assign credits from power plants that over-control mercury emissions to those that do not comply, potentially hundreds of miles apart. However, DEP’s allowance system discourages power plants from early mercury reductions because they don’t own the credits-- DEP could even assign them to a power plant’s competitor.

DEP Says:

- A cap and trade system will create “hotspots” of mercury because most mercury falls out locally, close to power plants.

The REALITY Is:

- What DEP is calling “local” mercury deposition is actually within 400 miles, much greater than the width of the entire state of Pennsylvania.
- A study of mercury deposition in Pennsylvania by [Dr. James A. Lynch from Penn State’s School of Forest Resources](#) said mercury deposition follows precipitation and weather patterns and is highly variable from year to year and season to season.
- Dr. Terrence M. Sullivan from [Brookhaven National Laboratory](#) did a study specifically to identify “hotspots” and presented that information to DEP’s Mercury Rule Work Group. He actually measured mercury concentrations around power plants, including in Pennsylvania, and said there is no evidence they exist.

DEP Says:

- Pennsylvania children are at risk of developmental disorders because of mercury emissions from power plants.

The REALITY Is:

- The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) did a nationwide study of women of childbearing age, infants and young children and found not a single case where mercury levels come any where near those required to cause adverse health effects.
- Dr. Jack Snyder, an M.D. and Toxicologist from the Annapolis Center for Science-Based Public Policy, said there is “no 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” in [testimony before the Senate](#).

Electric generators acknowledge that some smaller plants may not be able to raise the capital to install expensive scrubbers, and some plants face unique site-specific emission control equipment retrofit challenges. Some of these situations will require the purchase of emission allowances to survive in the competitive market. But that is what a cap and trade program is for.

Cap and trade encourages power plants that face lower marginal costs (in almost all cases the largest sources of emissions) to over-control their emissions, so that smaller sources that face higher marginal costs can pursue lower-cost options and buy allowances from the larger sources to make up for shortfalls.

Senate Bill 1201 and House Bill 2610 would require an 86 percent reduction in mercury emissions in Pennsylvania and are supported by a coalition of business, labor and coal industry groups that believe we can reduce mercury emissions and protect our jobs. The coalition supporting the proposal includes the:

- United Mine Workers of America;
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers;
- Pennsylvania Coal Association;
- Electric Power Generation Association;
- Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry;
- Pennsylvania Chemical Industry Council;
- Associated Petroleum Industries of Pennsylvania; and the
- Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association.

For more information visit the www.PaEnergyNews.com website.

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