Clear the Air - The National Campaign Against Dirty Power

Minnesota's Dirty Power Plants

Gopher State Air Pollution. The toxins from Minnesota's dirty power plants react with the state's climate and geography to produce unhealthy effects specific to Minnesota. Excessive nitrogen oxides from the state's dirty power plants combine with volatile organic compounds in the heat and light of Minnesota sunshine to yield ozone smog. Power plant sulfur dioxide emissions rack up hundreds of premature deaths in Minnesota yearly. Airborne mercury is contaminating our fish. Global warming fueled by power plant carbon dioxide emissions threatens increased tornadoes, flooding and heat waves.

Harming Your Health

Minnesota's 261,270 asthma victims suffer. ◆ Ozone smog sent 3,300 Minnesotans to the emergency room in 1997. In the Twin Cities alone there are about 66,000 asthma attacks every summer because of ozone smog.

Summer playground peril. ◆ Children active outside during the summer when ozone levels are highest are most at risk because they breathe 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults.

SIDS linked to soot. ◆ Areas with high levels of particulate pollution experience a 26 percent increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Infants in high pollution areas were 45 percent more likely to die of respiratory causes.

Don't eat the fish. ◆ Nearly half of Minnesota's lakes 1,375,992 acres and 3,075 miles of its rivers are contaminated with mercury. The state has advised against consuming certain fish due to mercury poisoning risks.

Damaging Your Environment

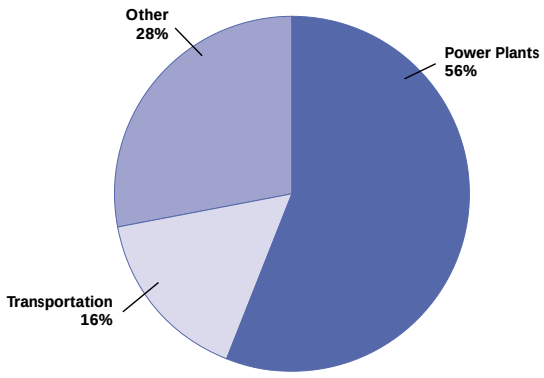
Choking aquatic life. ◆ Power plant nitrogen deposits increase algae blooms, unbalancing the ecosystem and killing aquatic life. Nitrates in the Mississippi River have more than doubled since 1965.

Ozone crop damage. ◆ Farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio lose between $225 million and $650 million annually from ozone crop damage. National-level crop losses due to ozone exceed $1 billion.

Increased weather disasters. ◆ Man-made carbon dioxide emissions are the probable cause for the rise in the earth's temperature and the increase in weather-related catastrophes, according to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Shrinking the Great Lakes. ◆ A 2-6º F rise in average air

Minnesota's Sulfur Dioxide Emissions



Clear the Air • 1200 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036 • 202/887-1715 (Phone) • 202/887-8880 (Fax) • Admin@cleartheair.org (E-mail)

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temperatures can reduce the water levels of the Great Lakes by more than 12 inches.

Older Dirty Power Plants: A Primary U.S. Polluter

The granddaddy's share. ◆ Less than 56 percent of power plant boilers are fueled by coal. But coal-fired boilers generate more than 93 percent of the power industry's NOx pollution, 88 percent of its carbon dioxide and 99 percent of its mercury.

Faster is not better. ◆ Since 1970, NOx emissions from all economic sectors have increased by 11 percent. NOx emissions from coal-fired power plants have increased at four times that rate (44 percent) over the same period.

The sulfur dioxide leader. ◆ Power plants are responsible for over 64 percent of the annual SO_2 total. The largest share of power plant-derived soot pollution comes from the conversion of SO_2 into fine particulate matter.

The mercury's rising.
Power plants are responsible for 34 percent of the total mercury emitted by all known sources.

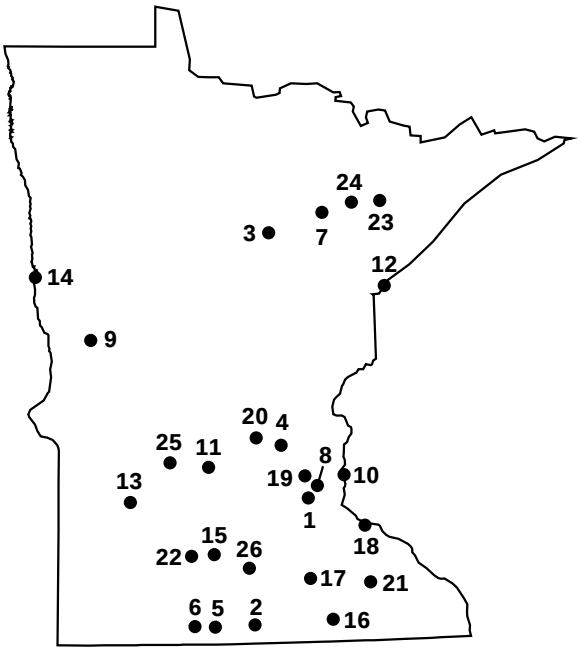
How to Clear the Air

Modernize old power plants. ◆ For 30 years the Clean Air Act has exempted the oldest, dirtiest power plants from complying with modern emissions standards. These "grandfathered" plants, some of which were built in the 1940s and '50s, emit as much as ten times more pollution than modern plants.

Set emission standards for mercury and CO_2.
◆ The U.S. agreed in the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Treaty to work toward a "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations" that would "prevent dangerous interference with the climate system." The treaty aimed to reduce CO_2 emissions to their 1990 levels by 2000; the U.S. has not complied. Nationwide CO_2 caps can achieve those goals in five years. Similar caps on mercury can reduce mercury poisoning.

Location of Power Plants in Minnesota

	Power Plant	Initial Year		Power Plant	Initial Year
1	Black Dog	1952	14	Moorhead	1970
2	Blue Earth	1944	15	New Ulm	1957
3	Clay Boswell	1958	16	Northwest Sta.	1971
4	Elk River	1951	17	Owatonna	1957
5	Fairmont	1945	18	Red Wing	1949
6	Fox lake	1950	19	Riverside	1949
7	Hibbing	1941	20	Sherburne	1976
8	High Bridge	1941	21	Silver Lake	1948
9	Hoot Lake	1948	22	Sleepy Eye	1946
10	King	1968	23	Syl Laskin	1953
11	Litchfield	1948	24	Virginia	1949
12	ML Hibbard	1931	25	Willmar	1949
13	Minnesota Valley	1953	26	Willmarth	1948



For a complete listing of sources, contact Clear the Air at: 202/887-1715 or admin@cleartheair.org. Clear the Air is a joint project of the Clean Air Task Force, U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund and the National Environmental Trust.

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