



REDUCING AIR TOXICS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

WHY SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT AIR TOXICS?

Air toxics, also known as “hazardous air pollutants,” are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive problems, birth defects, and aggravated asthma. These pollutants can also harm plants and animals. Some of these compounds (like asbestos) may persist in the environment and become more concentrated over time.

WHERE DO AIR TOXICS COME FROM?

Air toxics can come from both outdoor and indoor sources. Most outdoor air toxics originate from manmade sources, including mobile sources (cars, buses, trucks, trains, and ships) and stationary sources (factories, refineries, power plants, dry cleaners, painting and agricultural production). Some air toxics, such as radon, are released from earth and rock, as well as from some building materials.



Indoor sources of air toxics include vapor releases from new building materials such as carpeting, tobacco smoke, and some consumer products like household cleaners and pesticides.

Since we spend such a large portion of our time indoors, indoor air can be a significant contributor to air toxics exposures.

HOW CAN YOU REDUCE AIR TOXICS?

At home or work:

- Avoid smoking indoors.
- Have your home tested for radon and fixed, if high levels are indicated.
- Avoid excess use of pesticides and follow the manufacturer’s directions for application and disposal.
- Minimize use of household cleaning products and follow use and disposal directions.
- Keep containers of home, workshop and garden chemicals tightly sealed; dispose of empty or outdated products properly.
- Use paints with lower volatile organic compounds (VOC) content.
- Use products that emit fewer toxic chemicals, such as wood products with less formaldehyde.
- If your home was built before 1979, have the paint tested for lead.
- If your home is over 20 years old, have it checked for asbestos and have any asbestos removed by certified technicians.

- Conserve electricity to help reduce air pollution caused by power plants.
- Participate in your local utility's energy conservation programs.
- Look for the Energy Star label when buying home and office equipment.
- Use gas logs instead of wood. If you use a wood-burning stove or fireplace insert, make sure it meets EPA design specifications. Burn only dry, seasoned wood.

To find out what you can do to reduce air pollution, visit www.epa.gov/air/actions/. You can also learn about Tools for Schools, the Smoke-Free Homes Program, and testing your home for radon at: www.epa.gov/iaq/ or call EPA's Indoor Air Quality hotline at 1-800-438-4318.

In your car:

- Avoid smoking in your car
- Buy a fuel-efficient car.
- Combine errands to drive as few miles as possible; car pool, use public transportation, bike, or walk.
- Limit idling your car while waiting in lines.
- Accelerate gradually and avoid sharp braking.
- Keep your vehicle properly tuned.

To learn more, visit the Green Vehicles website at www.epa.gov/greenvehicles.



WHAT IS EPA DOING TO REDUCE AIR TOXICS?

National Efforts:

- EPA has issued a number of rules to control emissions of air toxics from many large industrial and commercial operations like refineries and chemical plants. Once fully implemented, these rules will reduce annual emissions of nearly 200 different air toxics by about 1.7 million tons (from 1990 emissions).
- EPA is working on rules to reduce emissions from smaller, but numerous operations, like paint stripping and autobody paint shops. To learn more about EPA's air toxics rules, see "Taking Toxics Out of the Air" brochure at www.epa.gov/ttn/atw.
- In addition, EPA is developing rules to reduce diesel emissions and other toxic air emissions from vehicles such as cars, trucks, planes, trains, and construction equipment.
- EPA has developed many national voluntary programs to reduce air toxics and exposure to air toxics from mobile, stationary, and indoor sources. Here are a few examples:

Clean School Bus USA is an EPA-sponsored voluntary program to reduce school children's exposure to air toxics and other pollution from school-bus emissions of air toxics, particle pollution and nitrogen oxides by replacing the oldest buses with new, cleaner buses and by installing equipment to control pollution emissions on other diesel buses. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus.



The Smoke-Free Home Pledge Campaign, another EPA-sponsored voluntary program, supports local organizations in reducing secondhand smoke exposure to children. Parents and caregivers are informed of the harmful health effects of secondhand smoke and encouraged to make their homes and cars smoke free.

For more information, visit www.epa.gov/smokefree/community.html.



Localized Approaches:

Although national efforts to reduce air toxics will continue to be essential, more localized approaches may be needed in some cities. That is why EPA is working with over thirty communities to gain a better understanding of their local air quality and to help reduce problem pollution sources.

Each community situation and approach is unique. However in each project the emphasis is on collaboration, shared resources, and citizen participation, to address whatever sources of pollution - large and small, mobile and stationary - indoor and outdoor - may be affecting the community. Some communities encourage car pooling, safer chemicals to use around the home or workplace, and making more informed consumer choices.

WAYS TO START UP OR BECOME INVOLVED IN A COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECT.

Contact your state, tribal, local, or regional environmental agency to get connected with area efforts and issues.

For contact information, see our website at www.epa.gov/epahome/whereyoulive.htm

EXAMPLE COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

New Haven, CT – The Community Clean Air Initiative

Background: For years, New Haven, has had a high rate of hospital and emergency room admissions for asthma. New Haven has a number of industrial facilities, two major highways, and an active shipping harbor. Collectively, the pollution from these different sources pose potential health risks.

Participants and Actions:

The City of New Haven developed an inventory of local sources of air toxics emission. Using this inventory, health, environment and business organizations developed an emissions reduction plan to:

- reduce diesel emissions from trucks and buses;
- promote smart growth and non-motorized transportation;
- improve indoor air quality in schools;
- work with smaller sources such as degreasing facilities and printers to reduce pollution; and
- incorporate environmental issues into city land-use planning.

New Haven is also working to increase the community's understanding of the health impacts from air toxics and other air pollutants.

Cleveland, OH – The Cleveland Clean Air Century Campaign

Background: A number of organizations in Cleveland are working to resolve toxic air pollution concerns from a mix of industrial, transportation-related and indoor sources. They are working to make substantial pollution reductions in their community, to be sustainable over time, and to be replicable in other communities.

Participants and Actions: Representatives from neighborhoods, businesses, and government agencies have teamed to develop and implement an action plan to reduce air toxics emissions. As a result, Cleveland has now implemented several programs to reduce the air pollution from diesel vehicles (buses, trucks and construction equipment) used by two school districts and one municipality. They have conducted anti-idling campaigns, held gas can exchange events, and worked with chromium electroplaters to further reduce air toxics. For more information, see <http://www.ohiolung.org/ccacc.htm>.

St. Louis, MO – The St. Louis Community Air Project

Background: The project's goal is "Healthier Air for St. Louis!" through regulatory and voluntary air toxics reduction measures.

Participants and Actions: A partnership of neighborhood associations, service providers, universities, local businesses, environmental groups, representatives of local, State and Federal governments came together to work on this project. The initial emphasis was to monitor and analyze air quality. The participants used health information to establish 'benchmarks' to evaluate their air pollution data. The second emphasis is on community involvement and education, including the use of its website, www.stlcap.org, and public libraries.

To learn more about completed and ongoing projects, see EPA's Air Toxics Community Assessment and Risk Reductions Project website at:

www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/urban/urbanpg.html.



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