



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CLEAN AIR TASK FORCE RELEASES “*TOLL FROM COAL*”  
DOCUMENTING THE DEATHS AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS  
FROM COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT EMISSIONS**

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**STUDY SHOWS THAT CLEAN AIR LAWS CAN DRAMATICALLY  
REDUCE POLLUTION BUT THAT MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE**

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**CATF CALLS FOR FURTHER REDUCTIONS THROUGH  
EPA RULEMAKING, ENFORCEMENT AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

WASHINGTON, September 9, 2010 – In a landmark report released today, the Clean Air Task Force has determined that reducing emissions of fine particle pollution from coal-fired power plants, one of the top contributors of air pollution in the U.S., can have a direct and significant positive effect on public health. “The Toll from Coal,” ([http://www.catf.us/coal/problems/power\\_plants/existing/](http://www.catf.us/coal/problems/power_plants/existing/)) the third such study from CATF, follows on their 2000 and 2004 reports and documents the progress in using modern pollution control technologies to decrease emissions of SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>, two of the most dangerous byproducts of coal combustion, and charts the progress to date in reducing the death and disease caused by coal-fired power plants.

“These findings show why it is so critical that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency adopt strong measures to clean up these plants, starting with strengthening the proposed Clean Air Transport Rule,” said Conrad Schneider, Advocacy Director of Clean Air Task Force, a Boston-based NGO that works to protect the earth's atmosphere by improving air quality and reducing global climate change through scientific research, public advocacy, technological innovation, and private sector collaboration. “We urge EPA to stay focused on protecting public health in the next year.”

The online version of the study also contains an interactive map that shows how the health risks and costs are distributed geographically, indicating that those areas with the highest concentration of coal plants bear a disproportionate share of negative public health impacts.

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Among the key findings of the report were:

- Coal-fired power plants remain among the top contributors to fine particle pollution, particularly SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>, in the country. This pollution is expected to cause over 13,000 premature deaths in 2010, as well as almost 10,000 hospitalizations and more than 20,000 heart attacks per year.
- The highest amounts of power plant-related deaths occurred in the large metropolitan areas of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, while on a per capita basis, Johnstown, PA led, followed by Cumberland, MD/WV, Steubenville-Weirton, OH/WV, Altoona, PA and Sandusky, OH, reflecting the reliance in “coal country” on generating electricity from coal-fired power plants.
- Since 2004, SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions have decreased by almost 50%, thanks to the installation of about 130 power plant “scrubbers” and other emission control measures, mandated through a combination of enforcement of the Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) and New Source Review provisions of the Clean Air Act, and state power plant clean-up laws.
- These pollution reductions, which have occurred without noticeably affecting electricity prices or consumer bills, natural gas prices, or the reliability of the power system, will prevent almost 11,000 premature deaths in 2010.
- With existing technology, continued enforcement of existing laws and regulations, and stronger EPA regulation and new federal legislation, fine particle pollutant levels and mortality rates in this country can be driven further down at an accelerating rate. Hundreds of coal-fired power plants do not yet have scrubber technology, so there is still an enormous opportunity to significantly enhance public health.

“The overarching message here is that intelligent regulation works, and without significant cost increases to the industry or the consumer,” Schneider continued. “We have made tremendous progress in ratcheting down the massive public health costs of emissions from coal-fired power plants over the past six years. However, the loss of 13,200 American lives each year, as well as other vast public health costs, are totally unacceptable, and we will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the toll from coal fired power plants is eliminated.”

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“From asthma attacks to premature deaths, air pollution from power plants still causes far too much harm to public health. This report makes clear that we must have strong rules to reduce air pollution,” said Janice Nolen, Assistant Vice President of National Policy and Advocacy for the American Lung Association. “EPA must adopt comprehensive measures, starting with a strong Clean Air Transport Rule, to further reduce power plant pollution.”

“Cutting pollution will boost the demand for clean energy technology, lead to new jobs and improve public health,” said Phyllis Cuttino, director of the Pew Environment Group’s Climate and Energy Program. “Pollution control technologies, such as scrubbers, are labor intensive and require significant man-hours by engineers, managers and skilled laborers. With hundreds of existing power plants without scrubbers, there remains an enormous opportunity to deploy clean energy technology that will create highly skilled jobs and protect the public.”

Schneider said that his group will advocate for EPA to strengthen and finalize its proposed Transport Rule for states east of the Rockies, which will replace the Clean Air Interstate Rule that was struck down in federal court in 2008. CATF will also push for a legislative solution that will set a more protective national cap of power plant SO<sub>2</sub> at 2 million tons per year in 2015 and 1.5 million tons in 2018, as well as 1.2 million tons of NO<sub>x</sub> in 2015.

“On the eve of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic Clean Air Act,” said Schneider, “we recognize that we still have a long way to go, but we are again energized to work towards the vision that clean, healthy air for all Americans remains a desirable, and attainable, national goal.”

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*Clean Air Task Force is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 dedicated to reducing atmospheric pollution through research, advocacy and private sector collaboration. For more information, please visit us at [www.catf.us](http://www.catf.us).*