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Here's What They're Saying About Mercury and Air Toxics Standards

WASHINGTON – Today EPA announced the first national standards to protect American families from power plant emissions of mercury and air toxics like arsenic, acid gas, nickel, selenium, and cyanide. These new Mercury and Air Toxics Standards will slash emissions of these dangerous pollutants by relying on widely available, proven pollution controls that are already in use at more than half of the nation's coal-fired power plants. Here's what people across the country, including environmental, faith, public health and business leaders are saying about Mercury and Air Toxics Standards:

Albert A. Rizzo, MD, American Lung Association:
"Since toxic air pollution from power plants can make people sick and cut lives short, the new Mercury and Air Toxics Standards are a huge victory for public health. The Lung Association expects all oil and coal-fired power plants to act now to protect all Americans, especially our children, from the health risks imposed by these dangerous air pollutants."

American Businesses for Clean Energy, American Sustainable Business Council, Ceres, Environmental Entrepreneurs, Main Street Alliance and the Small Business Majority:
"Our experience has shown that the Clean Air Act yields substantial benefits to the economy and to businesses, and that these benefits consistently outweigh the costs of pollution reductions. We believe the finalization of MATS [Mercury and Air Toxics Standards] is a meaningful step towards economic recovery and growth."

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg:
"Today, the President has done the right thing by ignoring the false claims of a narrow special interest and siding with the public health and the public good. The new EPA mercury standards will save countless lives and improve the quality of life for millions. The new rules will also accelerate the country's move away from heavily polluting coal power plants to cleaner energy sources that will continue to stimulate investment and economic activity long into the future."

Howard Learner, Environmental Law & Policy Center:
"These standards mean power plants will invest in modern pollution controls, and that investment will create jobs, cleaner air and better public health. Illinois adopted mercury pollution reduction standards in 2006 and modern control equipment has been installed at almost all coal plants in the state. The technology works, the lights have stayed on, mercury pollution has been reduced and children's health is better protected. It's time for the holdout utilities to stop crying wolf, stop stalling and clean up their pollution to protect children's health and our rivers and lakes."

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel:
"I commend the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for introducing new standards to reduce levels of dangerous toxins in our air. Limiting emissions of mercury and other pollutants from coal and oil-fired power plants will save thousands of lives, protect public health, and create jobs for Americans. Our experience in Illinois has shown that mercury emissions can be dramatically reduced without any impact on reliability, cost, or quality of service. We must continue to clean our air and clean up this industry across the country, to create opportunities for Americans and allow all Americans to lead healthier lives."

Alan Baker, American Public Health Association:
"The dangerous health risks associated with coal-burning power plants is no longer an elusive, distant threat. Exposure to air pollution and toxic chemicals can cause asthma and heart attacks, harm those suffering from respiratory illness and in some cases lead to death. Implementing these critically needed standards could mean the difference between a chronic debilitating, expensive illness or healthy life for hundreds of thousands of American children and adults."

The Rev. Fletcher Harper, GreenFaith:
"The EPA's new rule is a vital step forward morally and religiously. The great religious traditions to which so many US citizens belong – from Judaism, Christianity and Islam to Hinduism, Buddhism and more - are overwhelmingly clear that protecting life and the environment represent a moral responsibility, and that we are called to steward and protect an earth which, ultimately, does not belong to us. By saving thousands of lives – many of them from our nation's most vulnerable communities – and by preventing toxic emissions, this rule will help ensure that future generations inherit a healthier, cleaner planet."

Shannon Baker-Branstetter, Consumers Union:
"The health risks that mercury exposure poses are serious, especially since those most at risk are children and other vulnerable populations. Mercury from large industrial sources contaminates the air we breathe and common foods that many Americans eat. Regulating mercury emissions is just a common sense way to protect consumers from these health hazards and today's announcement is a critical step towards that goal."

Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham, President of Interfaith Power & Light President:
"This is good news for the religious community across America. The finalization of the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards shows us that the 40-year old Clean Air Act is still an invaluable tool to carry out our call to be stewards of God's Creation and to serve the least among us."

Lauren Randall, Environment America:
"Today President Obama stood up to the polluters and protected kids' health. This landmark achievement reflects what every parent knows, which is that powering our homes should not poison kids."

Roberto Carmona, Voces Verdes:
"Voces Verdes applauds the Obama Administration's important new standard to control and curb mercury and other toxic air pollution from power plants. This historic rule will benefit our nation as a whole and Latino families everywhere preventing the harmful effects of these pollutants, such as respiratory diseases, developmental problems and heart attacks in our communities. This rule protects our health while also creating thousands of jobs from the manufacturing, engineering, installation and maintenance of pollution controls to meet these standards, potentially including 46,000 short-term construction jobs and 8,000 long-term utility jobs. This is an important move to protect the public health while ensuring a brighter future for our communities."

Robert D. Brook, M.D., University of Michigan and American Heart Association:
"This historic action taken today by the EPA will mean that all of us now and in the future can expect to suffer fewer cardiovascular problems caused by breathing harmful air pollutants from power plants, and also see a reduction in other health issues related to mercury and fine particulate matter. Though much progress has been made in cleaning our nation's air over the past few decades, these added safeguards should help to further reduce cardiovascular disease, the No. 1 killer in the United States. With these standards in place, generations of Americans will now be able to breathe even cleaner air, a fact we should all be proud of as a nation."

Benjamin Todd Jealous, NAACP:
"This rule is a smart, sensible and overdue step to limit the dangerous effects of these toxins and address the racially disparate impact of air pollution. The standards will save millions of dollars in medical expenses by helping to prevent new cases of asthma attacks and other respiratory diseases that often strike families that can least afford it, while advancing a healthier quality of life for families across the nation."

Rabbi David Saperstein, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism:
"As heirs to a tradition of stewardship that teaches us to be partners in the ongoing pursuit of tikkun olam, or repairing the world, it is our sacred duty as Jews to care for the environment that sustains us. As such, we welcome the EPA's Mercury and Air Toxic Standards."

Katie Huffling, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments:
"As nurses, we applaud, President Obama and the EPA for their defense of the public's health as they release their new regulations on mercury and other toxic air emissions from power plants. Day in and day out we care for those who suffer from cancer, heart disease, neurological damage, birth defects, and asthma. These serious ailments affect whole families and communities. The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments recognizes the monumental decision that is being made to reduce power plant emissions and how this will contribute to improving the health of our most vulnerable populations - the very young and the very old, especially. On behalf of the patients and communities we serve, we are incredibly grateful for this important environmental health regulation."

Nsedu Witherspoon, Children's Environmental Health Network:
"We know that mercury can permanently damage a child's sensitive nervous system. If we want our children to reach their full potential, we need to get mercury out of their environment. This proposal is a practical, cost-effective and vital step toward this goal."

Bishop Stephen E. Blaire, Chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):
"The U.S. Catholic bishops welcome this important move by the Administration to adopt long-awaited standards to reduce mercury and toxic air pollution from power plants and to protect children's health," said Bishop Blaire. "In the end it just makes good sense to want to have clean air for our children and families to breathe and for future generations."

Richard Cizik, President of the New Evangelical Partnership:
"We want to applaud Administrator Lisa Jackson for her courage and determination in protecting not just the unborn in the womb, one out of six who are impacted by mercury, but also adult Americans who need protection from the impacts of mercury."