

COAL ASH FACT SHEET: Industry & Minority Concerns

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a proposed rule in July of 2010 to regulate coal ash, the toxic waste left behind after coal is burned for energy. The ash is made up of chemicals and metals like lead, mercury and arsenic and is a risk to human health and the environment. EPA's proposal gives two options for governance of coal ash. One option, known as Subtitle C, would create robust standards for regulating coal ash as a special hazardous waste. The second option, unbelievably, would treat coal ash like household garbage and EPA would merely set advisory guidelines that industry could choose to ignore and states could choose not to enforce.

Low-income and minority impacts

- ✓ Coal ash is a problem for low-income and minority communities.
 - ✓ **Over half of the coal plants in the country are surrounded by populations that exceeds state averages in terms of low-income individuals;**
 - ✓ Almost half of the EPA "high hazard" ash ponds in the Southeast are in low income areas;
 - ✓ These and other minority populations are at risk. For instance, the ash that devastated Roane County, TN after TVA's Kingston coal ash pond failure is now being shipped to Perry County, AL, a largely minority community where arsenic contamination has risen to levels 80 times the safe drinking water standards.
- ✓ In order to hide the negative impact that current ash storage practices have on low-income and minority communities, the coal industry is funding organizations that pretend to speak on behalf of low-income and minority individuals, when in fact, these organizations are advocating for industry interests.
 - ✓ Charles Steele, Jr., the founder of Working People for Fair Energy (WPFE), admits that the goals of WPFE are the same goals as energy giant Southern Company.
 - ✓ When he was a member of the Alabama Senate, Mr. Steele chaired the Industrial Recruitment Committee and Alabama Power was one of his biggest financial contributors.
 - ✓ When Mr. Steele took the helm of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Georgia Power gave the organizations millions of dollars to build a new headquarters.
 - ✓ **WPFE is allied with Partnership for Clean Energy (PACE). PACE was created by the same law firm that lobbies for Southern Company and its subsidiaries.**
 - ✓ The creator of PACE also works for the Business Council of Alabama and Manufacture Alabama.
 - ✓ PACE's members include chambers of commerce and unions representing thousands of Alabama Power employees.

These industry-funded front groups argue that coal ash regulation will predominantly burden low-income and minority communities. This argument is incorrect. EPA estimates that consumer energy prices will increase by only 0.8% with even the strictest proposed regulation. In the Southeast, that means a monthly bill will increase from \$0.79-\$2.06 a month at most. **Compared to the health and environmental costs of ash contamination, a price of less than \$25 each year is slight.**

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