

EIP REPORT: OTHER TOXIC COAL POLLUTION DUMPS AROUND THE U.S. POSE GREATER POTENTIAL DANGER THAN TENNESSEE COAL ASH SPILL DISASTER SITE

At Least 13 States Have 3 or More Under-Regulated “Wet Dumps” on Worst-Of Lists for Toxic Chemicals; One Coal Pollution Dump in Orlando, FL Holds 10 Times More Arsenic Than TN Disaster Site.

WASHINGTON, D.C.//January 7, 2009//Nearly 100 largely unregulated “wet dumps” across the United States that are comparable to the Tennessee Valley Authority’s breached site in Harriman, Tennessee for the storage of toxic pollution from coal-fired power plants have a place on one or more of the “worst site” lists for six toxic metals, including arsenic and lead, according to a new data analysis from the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project (EIP).

In fact, many of the toxic coal ash “wet dump” sites around the U.S. appear to pose a greater potential danger than the Tennessee site that is now in the headlines. In the case of deadly arsenic, which has been detected in water polluted by the TVA site disaster in Tennessee, the Stanton Energy Facility in Orlando, FL., has reported dumping roughly 10 times more of the carcinogen in its site between 2000-2006 than the TVA did over the same period in its now ruptured Harriman, TN storage pond site. According to the EIP analysis, at least 20 coal pollution dump sites reported more arsenic in coal ash impoundments than the Kingston site.

The TVA’s now-notorious pollution storage site in Tennessee was found by EIP to be on five of the six toxic chemical lists for the 50 worst coal-fired power plant pollution “wet dumps.” A total of five comparable disposal sites showed up on all six of the six worst-site lists for the toxic metals: TVA Widows Creek Fossil Plant, Jackson, AL; Duke Energy Gibson Generating Station, Gibson, IN; Georgia Power Scherer Steam Electric Generating Plant, Juliette, GA; Kentucky Utilities Co Ghent Station, Ghent, KY.; and Louisville Gas & Electric Co. – Mill Creek Station, Louisville, KY.

Using industry-reported data collected by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxic Reporting Inventory (TRI) data system for 2000-2006 (the latter being the most recent year for which complete data is available), EIP looked at the presence of arsenic, chromium, lead, nickel, selenium and thallium in the waste at Tennessee-style pollution dumping sites across the nation. The EPA has determined that these “surface impoundment” ponds (also known as “wet dumps”) are the most likely storage sites to leak pollution into groundwater and surface water, even without a catastrophic failure such as the one before Christmas at the TVA’s Kingston Steam Plant coal ash retention pond, which burst and covered the nearby area with more than a billion gallons of toxic-laden sludge.

The EIP analysis shows that a total of 13 states were found to have at least three coal-fired power plant “surface impoundment” dumping sites on the six 50-worst toxic chemical lists: Indiana, 11 dumps; Ohio, eight dumps; Kentucky, seven dumps; Alabama, seven dumps; Georgia, six dumps; North Carolina, six dumps; West Virginia, four dumps; Tennessee, four dumps; Illinois, three dumps; Michigan, three dumps; Pennsylvania, three dumps; Florida, three dumps; and Wyoming, three dumps.

Eric Schaeffer, director, Environmental Integrity Project, said: **“The Tennessee eco-disaster has cast a spotlight on what is a very serious national problem – the existence of under-regulated toxic pollution coal dump sites near coal-fired power plants that pose a serious threat to drinking water supplies, rivers and streams. Our analysis confirms that this problem is truly national in scope and that Tennessee may end up only being a warning sign of much more trouble to come. In addition to so-called ‘surface impoundments’ in ponds, we need to be concerned about inadequate oversight and monitoring of land-based disposal and other ‘storage’ of these toxic wastes. We can no longer afford to ignore this problem and we certainly can’t be content to just sit around and wait for the next Tennessee-style disaster to happen.”**

Lisa Evans, project attorney, EarthJustice, said: **“By highlighting the enormous volume of toxic chemicals present in coal ash, which is concentrated at single dump sites throughout the U.S, the EIP report points to the solution— federal regulations that require containment of the toxic ash**

produced by every U.S. coal plant. Nothing less will solve this serious problem and stop the ongoing damage to our health and environment.”

Christopher Irwin, staff attorney, United Mountain Defense, located in Knoxville, TN., said: "In Harriman Tennessee we were shocked when what is one of largest ecological disasters in American history destroyed an entire watershed and nearly a community. Now we are doubly shocked to find that this disaster may be set to repeat itself in communities all over. "These Ash piles maybe slowly poisoning America's greatest natural resource, our watersheds. The TVA disaster hopefully will be a wake-up call that protecting our precious water resources must be priority number 1. "Dead fish, sick residents, toxic sludge, dead rivers--the scene from the TVA disaster in Harriman Tennessee could repeat itself in unsuspecting communities throughout North America."

OTHER DATA IN REPORT

Other highlights of the new EIP report include the following:

- **Overall pollution.** Between 2000 and 2006, the power industry reported depositing coal ash containing more than 124 million pounds of the following six toxic pollutants into surface impoundments: arsenic, chromium, lead, nickel, selenium, and thallium. These pollutants are present in coal ash, prone to leaching from ash into the environment and highly toxic at minute levels (parts per million or billion) to either humans or aquatic life, or both.
- **Arsenic.** Alabama has the largest concentration of top 10 arsenic coal pollution dump sites, accounting for three of the heaviest concentration sites for 2000-2006: #2 Gaston Steam Plant, Wilsonville, Alabama; #3 Alabama Power Co. Gorgas Steam Plant, Parrish, AL; and #9 Alabama Power Co Greene County Steam Plant, Forkland, AL. By way of contrast, the TVA Kingston site was #20 on this list.
- **Lead.** The Stanton Energy Center in Orlando, FL., has the dubious distinction of being the worst plant dumping site in terms of both arsenic (see above) and lead. Another TVA site – Paradise Fossil Plant, Drakesbore, KY. – is #3 on the list of worst plants for lead pollution storage. At least 19 plants reported releasing more lead to surface impoundments than Kingston.
- **Nickel.** Once again, the Stanton Energy Center in Orlando, FL., tops the list with the highest level of reported nickel pollution. The #2 spot on the list goes to Duke Energy Corp Gibson Generating Station, Owensville, IN., which also ranks as #4 on arsenic and #2 on lead. At least 15 other plants disposed of nickel in amounts greater than Kingston between 2000 and 2006.
- **Chromium.** The #1 spot on the list goes to the J.M. Stuart Station, Manchester, OH. The Stanton Energy Center in Orlando (#3) and the Duke Energy Corp Gibson Generating Station (#4) follow closely behind it. A total of 16 facilities reported disposing of more chromium in surface impoundments than Kingston.
- **Selenium.** The top three spots on this list are as follows: First Energy Bruce Mansfield Power Plant, Shippingport, PA.; J.M. Stuart Station, Manchester, Ohio; and the Barry Steam Plant, Bucks, AL. A total of 15 facilities report releases of selenium between 2006 and 2006 that exceed the Kingston reports.
- **Thallium.** The top three spots on this list are as follows: Georgia Power Scherer Steam Electric Generating Plant, Julliette, GA; Kentucky Utilities Co. Ghent Station, Ghent, KY; and Duke Energy Corp Gibson Generating Station, Owensville, IN.

The copy of the full EIP report is available online at <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The EIP report outlines the following recommended remedial action steps:

1. Phase-out of all wet storage of toxic coal ash.
2. Immediate inspection and monitoring of all toxic coal ash storage and disposal units.
3. Federal regulation of all toxic coal ash storage and disposal by year's end.

ABOUT EIP

The Environmental Integrity Project (<http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in March of 2002 by former EPA enforcement attorneys to advocate for effective enforcement of environmental laws. EIP has three goals: 1) to provide objective analyses of how the failure to enforce or implement environmental laws increases pollution and affects public health; 2) to hold federal and state agencies, as well as individual corporations, accountable for failing to enforce or comply with environmental laws; and 3) to help local communities obtain the protection of environmental laws.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of today's news event will be available on the Web at <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org> as of 6 p.m. ET.