

Clean Wisconsin

(Founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade)

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Clean Wisconsin Applauds Governor Doyle's Goal to Reduce Mercury Emissions by 90%

Clean Wisconsin applauds the announcement today by Governor Jim Doyle directing the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a rule achieving a 90% reduction of mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants as soon as possible, and calling for a ban on products containing mercury. With this plan, Friday night fish fries in Wisconsin will become safer for men, women and children.

Based on Doyle's support for the 90% reduction, Clean Wisconsin urges the DNR staff and Board and legislature to recommend and approve new rules that would call for the 90% reduction by 2012.

"Governors of Wisconsin's neighboring states have called for 90% reductions in mercury from coal-fired power plants—Illinois by 2009 and Michigan by 2015. Minnesota already signed into law a 90% reduction of mercury from coal-fired power plants by 2014," said Mark Redsten, Executive Director of Clean Wisconsin. "We look forward to working with the DNR, utilities and environmental and conservation groups to develop a new rule that is consistent with our neighboring states, and that responsibly deals with mercury pollution from power plants."

Redsten added, "The evidence is clear: the technology to reduce mercury pollution is available, affordable and a 90% mercury reduction is certainly achievable."

Mercury Products Legislation

Because coal-fired power plants are not the only source of this toxic pollution, Clean Wisconsin is also pleased that Governor Doyle called for a comprehensive ban on many mercury products, such as thermostats, light bulbs, and thermometers, and a ban on mercury products in schools.

"Products containing mercury are often thrown into our landfills, where they can seep into and eventually pollute the groundwater," confirmed Clean Wisconsin Program Director, Keith Reopelle, a member of the Governor's Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal. "This legislation just makes sense when safe and inexpensive alternatives are available."

Because there is clear evidence that mercury does impact the health of people, especially children, it's time for Wisconsin to step up and be a leader again. Because of Governor Doyle's support for reducing mercury emissions and banning products containing mercury, today we are starting down that path toward making Wisconsin a healthier and safer place.

Background on the Health Impacts of Mercury

There is solid evidence to show that certain forms of mercury have toxic effects. It is a well documented neurotoxin that affects the brain and nervous system, particularly in developing fetuses and children under 15 years of age. New evidence also indicates that some exposure may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease in humans, particularly adult men.

On average, three times more mercury now falls out of the sky than before the industrial revolution 200 years ago. Fish advisories are now on all of the lakes and rivers in the State of Wisconsin due to mercury contaminated fish.

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and corporations accountable. Founded in 1970 as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, Clean Wisconsin exposes corporate polluters, makes sure existing environmental laws are enforced, and educates citizens and businesses. On behalf of its 10,000 members and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play. Phone: 608-251-7020, Fax: 608-251-1655, Email: info@cleanwisconsin.org, Website: www.cleanwisconsin.org.

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