

ACHD's proposed Air Toxics Guidelines: Why Allegheny County Should Address Toxic Chemicals in Our Air

Why do we need the new Air Toxics Guidelines (ATG)?

The Clean Air Act only sets standards for what we can breathe in the air for **six** chemicals, but industries in Allegheny County emit **hundreds** of toxic chemicals. More toxic chemicals are released in Allegheny County than in Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties **combined!** In this past year and a half we have received 7 different reports saying more needs to be done to improve our air. The current version of the guidelines is from 1988 and uses information that is over 20 years old.

What will the new ATG do?

- The ATG requires any new or expanding plant proposing to emit toxic chemicals will be required to go through a screening for whether the chemicals they emit will harm residents.
- There are exemptions for small businesses emitting small quantities of chemicals.
- Big pollution sources will be required to take into consideration nearby existing pollution sources when determining if a new permit should be allowed. We sometimes refer to this as a "cumulative impact".
- The ATG will not affect any existing source of pollution in Allegheny County, unless they need a permit to expand and increase their pollution.

Why is this so important?

First and foremost, the health of the residents of Allegheny County is at stake. Some of these toxic chemicals can cause serious health problems, like cancer, birth defects, and developmental problems. In Allegheny County we have seen increased rates in asthma and cancer over the past years. The ACHD has an obligation to protect the health of the citizens of Allegheny County – the new guidelines will further that obligation. We need updated standards to properly protect our health. At least 15 other states do a similar screening for companies proposing to release toxic chemicals – including every state surrounding Pennsylvania (OH, WV, NY, MD, and NJ).



Steve Hvozdovich
100 Fifth Ave., #1108
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-765-3053 x 210
shvozdovich@cleanwater.org