

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's Mapping Mortality Series

**Heart and lung disease and lung cancer mortality rates for municipalities in Southwestern Pennsylvania are higher than the national average.**

**Mortality rates around the region's 16 coal-fired power plants and other major stationary pollution sources are even higher than other areas.**

The results of a year-long investigation on the relation between pollution, poor air quality and excess deaths in Southwestern Pennsylvania, by Don Hopey and David Templeton, was published in an eight-part series in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* between December 12 and December 19, 2010.

## **Key Findings:**

- \* **14,636 more people died** from heart and respiratory disease and lung cancer in Western Pennsylvania between 2000 and 2008 than national rates would predict (12,833 after adjusting for excess smoking in the region).
- \* **Fifty** or more requests are made to the Department of Health every year to investigate **cluster deaths**, a high number of deaths in a small area. Many of these requests come from communities near pollution sources and are of **great concern for citizens**.
- \* “For every dollar spent to reduce pollution, according to the EPA and other sources, society would receive \$100 in health benefits.”
- \* **Violations of pollution permits** have been cited at many of Western Pennsylvania's 16 coal-fired power plants, but **penalties have been very small**, even for repeat offenders.
- \* **Transport pollution**, air pollution emitted in neighboring states that defies borders, accounts for **50 percent of the total** particulate pollution in Southwestern Pennsylvania.
- \* To attract jobs and people to the area, **air and water quality improvements are absolutely necessary**. Companies look for places where employees will be healthy.

Please visit the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Web site for access to the full series:

<http://multimedia.post-gazette.com/MappingMortality/PartI/default.asp>

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