

Two Environmental Crimes Committed by the Energy Industry

Mark Sardella, P.E.

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Lead in Gasoline

In 1921, **General Motors** introduced a gasoline that was blended with its patented anti-knock lead additive. In doing so it ignored four years of its own research that showed ethanol to be a safe, effective alternative as an antiknock agent in gasoline. Ethanol, also known as grain alcohol, could not be patented because it was commonly known how to manufacture it. Repeated objections to blending a known neurotoxin to gasoline were successfully overruled by **General Motors, Dupont**, and Standard Oil (now **Exxon**), and over the next 65 years some 7 million tons of lead would be burned and blanketed across our landscape. An estimated 68 million American children were exposed to toxic lead levels, for which the most common symptoms are neurological injuries including lowered IQ, learning disabilities, and interference with growth. The EPA estimated that some 325,000 Americans died lead-related deaths during this time. The mean blood lead-level of Americans has dropped 75% as a result of the phase-out in the U.S., but leaded gasoline is still used in many countries throughout the world including Venezuela, where two thirds of the children are born with blood-lead levels in excess of so-called "safe" levels promulgated by the U.S. government. Leaded gasoline can still be purchased at most airports in the United States.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20000320&s=kitman&c=1>

Special Exemptions to the Clean Air Act

1970 brought the Clean Air Act, but **The Electric Utility Industry** successfully lobbied for a special exemption to allow their coal-fired power plants to continue operating without modification. These plants, they argued, would soon be replaced by newer, cleaner power plants. When the EPA created the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) in 1987, utilities successfully used their CAA exemption to argue that they were not required to comply with the EPA's reporting requirements. For ten years they successfully defended this position, but in 1997 they were finally forced to report toxic emissions. The 1998 TRI told the world what many insiders already knew: The U.S. electric utility industry, led by Southern Company, American Electric Power, and Tennessee Valley Authority, is the dirtiest industry in the U.S. While their combined total toxic releases of one billion pounds annually was topped by the metal mining industry, nearly all toxins from mining metals are released to land. Electric utilities, by contrast, release nearly eighty percent of their toxins to the air. Airborne releases of toxins by electric power exceed the combined releases of the chemical, paper, plastics, and refining industries! The airborne toxins released include about 9 million pounds of metals and metal compounds, including approximately 52 tons of mercury. Although these toxic releases are now being reported, the special exemptions remain in place and coal-fired power plants still produce 56% of our nation's electricity. Utilities claim that their toxic releases pose no threat to the public, and they make this claim in spite of an October, 2000 study funded by Pew Charitable Trusts that concluded that coal-fired particulate pollution kills 30,000 Americans annually.

<http://www.environet.policy.net/cleanair/tri/>