



Factsheet: Mercury Pollution in Illinois

Mercury is a threat to your health

- Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can cause damage to the central nervous system— especially in infants and young children.
- Developing fetuses exposed to mercury can suffer mental retardation, cerebral palsy, lower IQs, slow motor functions, deafness and blindness.
- More than one child in six could be at risk for developmental disorders because of mercury exposure in the mother's womb.

Mercury is Forever

- Once mercury enters the water, it becomes toxic and accumulates in plants, insects, and animals, including fish.
- Salmon, catfish and trout may have mercury levels more than a millions times higher that the surrounding water.

Powerplants are Worst Offenders

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ranks Illinois fourth nationally for mercury pollution hot spots.
- The largest source of mercury is fossil-fueled power plants: The state's coal-fired power plants emit 7,000 pounds of mercury into the air every year.

A Powerplant Plan that Works

- In January, Governor Rod Blagojevich announced a proposal to set strict mercury emissions limits for coal-fired power plants, calling for a 90 percent reduction in emissions by June 2009.
- Illinois would become only the fourth state in the country to implement such stringent standards, going well beyond U.S. EPA rules issued last year.
- After approval from the Illinois Pollution Control Board, the proposal will be reviewed by the legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. Public support will let our representatives know this plan should become the law in Illinois.