

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 6, 2010

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### **Community Groups Defend EPA Plans to Clean Up Cement Kiln Pollution**

*Cement industry groups challenge protections that would save 2,500 lives every year*

Washington, D.C. – A coalition of community environmental groups moved to support efforts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up to 90 percent of dangerous mercury, fine particles, and other toxic air pollution from over 100 cement kilns. The agency estimates the pollution limits will avoid up to 2,500 premature deaths, prevent thousands of heart and respiratory incidents, and save billions of dollars in health costs every year starting in 2013 when the rules take effect.

Despite obvious benefits for health and the economy, the Portland Cement Associationan industry trade group representing 41 of the biggest cement companies in North America-challenged the EPA's protective rule in court last month. Earthjustice, on behalf of Desert Citizens Against Pollution (CA), Downwinders at Risk (TX), Friends of Hudson (NY), Huron Environmental Activist League (MI), Montanans Against Toxic Burning (MT) and Sierra Club are intervening today on behalf of the EPA in the industry lawsuit.

In September, the EPA finalized protective standards for cement kiln emissions that:

- Cut mercury emissions by 16,600 pounds, roughly 92 percent
- Cut particulate matter emissions by 11,500 tons, roughly 92 percent
- Cut hydrogen chloride emissions by 5,800 tons, roughly 97 percent
- Cut total hydrocarbons emissions 10,600 tons, roughly 83 percent

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that can build up through the food chain and interferes with the brain and nervous systems, resulting in birth defects, loss of IQ and developmental problems. Particulate matter causes serious health impacts on lungs and breathing, including decreased lung function, aggravated asthma, irritation of the airways, coughing or difficulty in breathing, as well as heart problems. Hydrogen chloride also causes respiratory problems such as coughing, irritated nose and throat, and heart problems.

“The EPA did the right thing by proposing a rule that curbs pollution, protects health and communities, and follows the law,” said Seth Johnson, Associate Attorney at Earthjustice. “These multi-billion dollar cement companies have been able to emit mercury and other toxins without limit for decades. The people who live with these emissions every day need the protection EPA's standards will provide.”

“The Lafarge plant in Ravena New York has been operating for almost 50 years without the proposed emissions limits and has perpetrated the myth that it is perfectly safe and legal,” said Susan Falzon with Friends of Hudson. “We’ll never know just how much damage has been done to the public health and the environment, but we know that without EPA limits these companies will continue to pollute with impunity and continue to expose the public to unnecessarily high levels of dangerous emissions.”

“As someone who lives in the plume of one of these kilns, I want to see them reduce their pollution to the maximum extent feasible, and these federal rules require that. This industry needs to be a good neighbor in the communities they are affecting and cleanup their pigpen ways,” said Jane Williams, member of Desert Citizens Against Pollution.

“We have lived with the most toxic forms of air pollution from the Lafarge cement plant here in Alpena, Michigan, for decades. The 2009 EPA Toxic Release Inventory lists them as the largest cement kiln air polluter in the country,” said William Freese, Director of Huron Environmental Activist League. “One has to wonder how many of those 2,500 premature deaths per year can be attributed to their air pollution.”

“The largest concentration of cement manufacturing in the entire country is just outside of the Dallas/Fort Worth area in Midlothian, Texas,” said Becky Bornhorst with Downwinders At Risk. “Without EPA regulations, these plants will continue to burden the citizens of Midlothian with unparalleled amounts of air pollution causing numerous health effects to people and animals.”

“Cement kiln Maximum Allowable Control Technology rules are needed to reduce toxic air pollution because cement kilns release large volumes of air toxics into community air supplies and the environment,” said Neil Carman with the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter in Austin, Texas. He added that “The EPA's Cement kiln MACT rules are vital in Texas because there are more Portland cement kilns here than any other state and many communities bear the burden of the toxic emissions from these facilities.”

“These cement kilns are some of the biggest polluters in our country,” said Jennifer Swearingen, with Montanans Against Toxic Burning. “The EPA finally made the move to clean up these facilities, but the industry just doesn’t want to comply. The neighborhoods and communities where these kilns are located have waited far too long for clean air.”

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