

PRESS RELEASE

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Tennessee Toxins on the Rise TN Toxic Releases Up by 3 Million Pounds

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The annual Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report on toxins emitted by industry was released on April 11, 2001. Once again Tennessee ranks high among pollution emitting states on this Toxic Release Inventory (TRI). "The good news is that we went down slightly in toxic releases to surface water, but the bad news is that we went up in total releases across the state, including increased toxins to both air and land." said Robert Diehl, President Tennessee Environmental Council. Tennessee remains 14th in the nation for total toxins emitted to air, land, and water, with over 144 million pounds of toxins emitted in 1999. That's a 3 million pound increase compared to 141 million in 1998. Nationwide, over 7.7 billion pounds of toxins were reported in 1999, a 5% increase over 7.3 billion pounds in 1998. The top state in 1999 was Nevada, due primarily to emissions from metal mining in that state

The largest source of toxic pollution in Tennessee in 1999 was the electric utility industry. Power plants were the largest emitters to both air and water, and second only to metal mining for discharges to land. Generating electricity in Tennessee emitted over 42 million pounds of toxins in 1999, consisting primarily of air pollution. The largest single source was the TVA Johnsonville Fossil Plant, a coal-burning power plant that emitted over 15 million pounds of toxins in 1999, 90% of which was emitted as air pollution. The top 10 emitting facilities in Tennessee included 4 TVA power plants, namely Johnsonville, Gallatin, Kingston, and Cumberland Fossil Plants.

Air pollution is the most serious form of pollution in Tennessee, In fact, 75% of the toxins released in Tennessee are emitted into the air we breathe. Overall Tennessee ranks 5th in the nation for total air toxins released, with over 107 million pounds, a 2 million pound increase over 1998. Only Ohio, North Carolina, Texas and Pennsylvania have more air toxins than Tennessee. "With so much of this pollution coming from generating electricity, it is imperative that we clean up our coal-fired power plants and push forward toward clean, renewable energy sources. The administration's proposed budget cuts to energy conservation and environmental protection would send us backward instead of forward." said Dr. Gwen Griffith, Executive Director of the Tennessee Environmental Council.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the main power generator in Tennessee, is the largest polluter primarily due to their heavy reliance on coal-fired power plants that are not required to meet modern pollution control standards. While the numbers released are from 1999, there are still no limits placed on these air emissions. "The increase in toxic air emissions from TVA is yet another signal that we need a comprehensive federal solution to cleaning up power plants," said Ulla-Britt Reeves of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. "We call on the Tennessee congressional delegation to support legislation to clean up the coal-fired power plants and protect public health and the environment. In

addition, the EPA has authority to regulate toxic air releases and toxic coal combustion waste, but they have failed to do either.”

The primary concern about these pollutants is the impact they have on human health and the health of our ecosystems, such as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. "We really don't know what these dangerous pollutants are doing to the people who live down wind of them. We do know that we need to be reducing these pollutants, not increasing them," said Janice Nolen, Director of Program for the Tennessee American Lung Association.

The TRI report is a key component of the Community Right-to-Know Act, created to inform the public and encourage industries to reduce their levels of pollution. This marks the second year that the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) has required reporting by the electric power plants, including the TVA. Considering the magnitude of the pollution power plants emit, the EPA is to be commended for adding this important information to its annual report to the public. “A few weeks ago, I received a call from a man in Pennsylvania. He was considering moving to Tennessee but wanted to know about the health of our environment before making his decision. I told him about the natural beauty of Tennessee and I also told him about the toxin reports in our state. He found that disturbing until I pointed out that Pennsylvania was even worse on the TRI list than we are.” said Dr. Gwen Griffith, Executive Director of the Tennessee Environmental Council. “People care very much about the state of their environment and they make important personal and business decisions based on this information.”

The toxin increases reported on the latest TRI points out that it is time for Congress to move forward with legislation that brings power plants up to modern standards of pollution control. “In the face of unprecedented population growth and urban sprawl, the need for aggressive controls of all types of air pollution is becoming ever more acute.” Griffith added.

The complete TRI information may be viewed at www.epa.gov/tri

Comparison of Tennessee TRI Reports for 1998 and 1999
* Total pounds released

TRI Reporting Year	TN Total Releases*	State Rank Total Releases	TN Air Releases*	State Rank Air Releases	TN Water Releases*	State Rank Water Releases	TN Land Releases*	State Rank Land Releases
1999	144,311,027	14 th	107,259,929	5 th	2,795,230	28 th	27,019,381	15 th
1998	141,187,312	14 th	105,309,378	4 th	3,433,678	21 st	22,307,337	17 th

