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## **EPA to finalize Clean Air Transport Rule, reduce coal pollution in Chicago**

This week, the U.S. EPA is expected to finalize the Clean Air Transport Rule (CATR), which will greatly reduce coal power plant pollution in the United States. The measure is expected to save more than 14,000 lives and prevent more than 240,000 asthma attacks each year across the U.S.

The CATR will require that approximately 180 coal power plants nationwide collectively lower their emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) to less than half of the levels produced in 2005. To do so, power plant owners will need to use switch to cleaner fuels, install and operate pollution control equipment, and shut down some obsolete plants. Finalizing this rule completes a federal effort started in 2005 aimed at reducing unhealthy ozone and fine particle air pollution levels plaguing urban areas in the eastern half of the U.S.

Coal power plants contribute to high pollution levels that increase asthma attacks, bronchitis cases, heart attacks, strokes, emergency room visits and hospital stays, and premature deaths. Air pollution also leads to millions of lost school and workdays due to sickness. By reducing pollution levels, CATR will save lives and prevent health emergencies nationwide.

"This rule makes good progress in cleaning up some of the air pollution from power plants, but it isn't a cure-all for coal pollution," said Brian Urbaszewski, director of environmental health programs for Respiratory Health Association. "The rule will reduce fine particulate matter and ozone, but it fails to address dangerous toxic air pollution, which contributes to major lung health concerns in Chicago and across the country."

In November, EPA is expected to finalize regulations to cap power plant toxic air pollution emissions, including arsenic, lead, cadmium and acid gas emissions. But congressional leaders have already announced their intention to block EPA from limiting toxic air pollution.

"Coal power plants are so harmful to our health that we cannot accept a partial solution as a win," Urbaszewski said. "Each of the elements these plants emit is harmful, and reducing only a few pollutants does not prevent the damage the plants continue to cause."

On a local level, CATR will not mandate that the Fisk and Crawford coal power plants on the densely populated southwest side of Chicago reduce their harmful emissions. The Chicago Clean Power Ordinance, co-sponsored by 26 aldermen in May 2011, will require those plants located in Chicago to reduce global warming pollution by 50 percent and reduce direct toxic soot emissions that now fall in neighborhoods close to the plants by 90 percent within four years. The new city council and Mayor Rahm Emanuel will decide passage of the ordinance.

EPA has not yet acted to address global warming pollution from older coal power plants; climate models show that Chicago will experience temperatures as high as 115 degrees and increasing ozone smog in coming decades without action to address global warming.

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today, the association addresses asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. For more information, visit [www.lungchicago.org](http://www.lungchicago.org).