



Toxic Times

A weekly recap of the top stories on toxics in Michigan and beyond.

News Highlights from February 18, 2009 – March 10, 2009

MICHIGAN NEWS

EPA halts dioxin talks with Dow Chemical – again

The Saginaw News, Sunday, March 8, 2009

Environmental Protection Agency director Lisa Jackson has placed talks with Dow Chemical Co. about the cleanup of dioxins from Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay watershed on hold while the new administration analyzes the situation.

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090309/METRO/903090412/1409/METRO>

Toward healthier waters

Living on Earth, Friday, March 6, 2009

President Obama's administration has set aside half a billion dollars to clean up the Great Lakes, which contain pollutants that adversely affect wildlife and human health alike.

<http://www.loe.org/shows/segments.htm?programID=09-P13-00010&segmentID=2>

Detroit firefighters clean up sulphur dioxide leak

The Detroit Free Press, Monday, March 9, 2009

The Detroit Fire Department is overseeing the cleanup of sulphur dioxide that was released from a railcar for unknown reasons. Sulphur dioxide is known to aggravate respiratory illness, particularly in the young or elderly, as well as cause acid rain.

<http://www.freep.com/article/20090309/NEWS01/90309052>

No money to pursue polluters: State environmental agency can't afford to investigate contaminated wells in Kalamazoo Township

The Kalamazoo Gazette, Sunday, March 8, 2009

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, which has suffered extensive budget cuts in recent history, cannot afford to determine the source of a trichloroethylene contamination that polluted fifteen private wells.

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2009/03/no_money_to_pursue_polluters.html

Mogul awaits waste well ruling

The Detroit News, Monday, March 2, 2009

Dimitrios 'Jim' Papas, owner of Environmental Geo-Technologies LLC, is waiting for both federal and state government permits to begin operating two deep injection wells in Romulus. The wells are a contentious issue due to resident opposition and an investment made by Detroit's Police and Fire Retirement System.

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090302/METRO/903020355/1409/METRO>

Saginaw Township firefighters deal with mercury spill

The Saginaw News, Friday, February 27, 2009

Firefighters closed an old water treatment facility after a piece of equipment spilled 12 pounds of mercury.

http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2009/02/saginaw_township_firefighters.html

Bankruptcy brings cleanup of Kalamazoo River nearly to a halt

The Kalamazoo Gazette, Friday, February 27, 2009

The bankruptcy filing of LyondellBasell Industries has greatly slowed the cleanup of PCBs from the Kalamazoo River. Lyondell was one of two companies found to be responsible for much of the contamination of the river.

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2009/02/plainwell_heavy_machinery_used.html

NATIONAL NEWS

Some good news: Fewer kids have high lead levels

The Associated Press via the International Herald Tribune, Sunday, March 1, 2009

A new federal report indicates that rates of elevated blood lead levels have dropped significantly among children since 1988. The decrease, about 84 percent, is attributed to aggressive action to remove lead from children's environment.

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2009/03/01/america/MED-Children-Lead.php>

Administration plans new regulations on coal-ash ponds

The New York Times, Saturday, March 7, 2009

The Obama Administration plans to propose new legislation regulating coal-ash ponds by the end of the year in hopes of preventing more incidents similar to the breach in December that resulted in the release of more than a billion gallons of coal ash from a pond operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/us/politics/08ash.html>

Taking on toy safety

BusinessWeek, Friday, March 6, 2009

Responding to new legislation and the effects of recalls in other industries, the Toy Industry Assn. is developing a system to allow manufacturers to ensure compliance in every step of production.

http://www.businessweek.com/managing/content/mar2009/ca2009036_271002.htm?chan=careers_managing%20index%20page_top%20stories

Schools to keep bugs at bay a safer way

Environmental Health News, Friday, March 6, 2009

The EPA is asking schools to adopt an integrated pest management program by 2015. Integrated pest management aims at preventing the conditions conducive to pest infestation, and experts anticipate that such practices could reduce pesticide use by as much as 70 percent.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/school-pesticide-plan>

EPA: Air tests near schools a priority

USA Today, Sunday, March 1, 2009

The Environmental Protection Agency is planning to test 100 of the nation's schools in an attempt to measure the air pollution levels children are exposed to on the campuses.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2009-03-01-epa_N.htm

Chemical industry calls for tougher regulation

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Thursday, February 26, 2009

Members of the American Chemistry Council, the representative organization for American chemical producers, have called for increased regulation by the federal government, claiming that the public has lost faith in current regulatory practices.

<http://www.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/40402882.html>

Chemical Fallout: A Journal Sentinel Watchdog Report

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel – Read the newspaper's award winning series:

Warning: Chemicals in the packaging, surfaces or contents of many products may cause long-term health effects, including cancers of the breast, brain and testicles; lowered sperm counts, early puberty and other reproductive system defects; diabetes; attention deficit disorder, asthma and autism. A decade ago, the government promised to test these chemicals. It still hasn't.

<http://www.jsonline.com/watchdog/34405049.html>

Secondhand smoke may double likelihood of depression

USA Today, Wednesday, March 4, 2009

A large study by the American Psychosomatic Society has shown a linkage between secondhand smoke inhalation and major depression.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-03-04-secondhand-smoke_N.htm

PCBs alter rat hormones, organs in two generations

Environmental Health News, Friday, February 27, 2009

New research showed that hormonal and tissue changes can occur in rats never exposed to polychlorinated biphenyls, but whose grandmothers were during pregnancy. The results suggest that the changes caused by PCBs not only appear to be permanent, but that they actually persist through multiple generations.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/newscience/pcbs-alter-growth-in-two-generations/>

EPA is told to reconsider its standards on particulate pollution

The New York Times, Tuesday, February 24, 2009

A federal appeals court has ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider a decision from the previous administration that left particulate pollution levels unaltered, despite members of the agency's scientific staff recommending lowering allowable levels in 2006.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/25/science/earth/25air.html?_r=1

EPA says farm dust requires regulation as particulate pollution

The Associated Press via The Chicago Tribune, Thursday, February 26, 2009

Environmental Protection Agency regulators have decided that particulate matter in the form of dust from agriculture will be held to the same standards as urban areas, a decision

that farmers claim is nearly impossible to comply with and will lower their ability to compete in an international market.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-ia-dustrules,0,4165579.story>

Study: ships contribute to particulate air pollution

The Associated Press via MSN, Thursday, February 26, 2009

The world's shipping fleet is estimated to emit a quantity of particulate pollution approximately equal to half of that emitted by automobiles, according to a new federal study.

<http://news.moneycentral.msn.com/provider/providerarticle.aspx?feed=AP&date=20090226&id=9649791>

Mercury plan shot down

The Charleston Post and Courier, Tuesday, February 24, 2009

The U.S. Supreme Court effectively defeated a plan to create a mercury cap-and-trade system by deciding not to hear an appeal case on the issue. Critics claimed the system would allow some coal-fired power plants to produce more mercury, effectively creating hotspots of contamination.

http://www.charleston.net/news/2009/feb/24/mercury_plan_shot_down72776/

Smokers who step outside still bring their leftover poisons back through the door

Cleveland Plain Dealer, Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Researchers have found that about 250 chemicals from cigarette smoke return inside with a smoker, even if the actual smoking occurred outside.

http://blog.cleveland.com/health/2009/02/smokers_who_step_outside_still.html

Meth makers leave behind a toxic trail at motels

The Associated Press via The Star-Telegram, Monday, February 23, 2009

The production of methamphetamine can leave behind toxic residues and chemicals. This is particularly a problem when producers use motel rooms, as the danger is transferred to cleaning personnel and future clients.

<http://www.star-telegram.com/461/story/1218959.html>

Chromium carcinogenic in water; new standard in the works

Environmental Health News, Friday, February 20, 2009

Hexavalent chromium has been found to be carcinogenic in water. Many suspect that the conclusion, the result of a decade of debate, will result in new limits for the substance in drinking water.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/chromium-in-drinking-water>

BPA changes hormones that control puberty, ovulation

Environmental Health News, Wednesday, February 18, 2009

New research has shown that the chemical bisphenol A can permanently affect reproductive hormones, changing the onset of puberty and resulting in irregular ovulation. The study was also the first to show that BPA can cause effects after birth, whereas previous studies had looked at the effects of the progeny of exposed individuals.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/newscience/BPA-affects-early-puberty-ovulation-in-rats/>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

4 chemicals used in consumer products slapped with toxic label

Canwest News Service, Friday, March 6, 2009

Canada's federal government has labeled four compounds typical of paints, varnishes, stains, and industrial cleaners as toxic, allowing for government regulation, as well as possible banning.

<http://www.canada.com/news/chemicals%20consumer%20products%20slapped%20with%20toxic%20label/1362478/story.html>

Killer pesticides spread concern in Makkah

Jeddah Arab News, Monday, March 9, 2009

Over the past few months, several deaths in Jeddah have been attributed to pesticide use, resulting in civil outcry for some pesticides to be restricted.

<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=120047&d=9&m=3&y=2009>

Niger Delta villagers angered over waste dumping

Voice of America, Sunday, March 8, 2009

Villagers of the Niger Delta are infuriated over the dumping of waste in the region, claiming that the proximity is having adverse effects on their crops and drinking water.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-03-08-voa11.cfm>

The Bhopal disaster: 25 years later

The Global Post, Thursday, February 26, 2009

A quarter century after one of the worst industrial disasters, the effects of the Bhopal gas leak are felt by second and third generations of residents of the nearby slum. However, with new organizations and a court ruling in favor of the plaintiffs, some hope that progress will finally be made.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/india/090226/the-bhopal-disaster-25-years-later>

Fears of 'toxic' West Bengal fish

The BBC, Friday, February 20, 2009

Two NGOs have discovered that types of fish popular for human consumption in West Bengal contain high levels of toxic mercury. The state government, while not officially commenting on the report, blames any mercury contamination on heavy industry.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7901570.stm

Toxic waste stockpile spurs push to export it to Europe

The Sydney Australian, Thursday, February 19, 2009

A report supported by the federal government has recommended that Australia find a country in Europe willing to incinerate more than 60,000 barrels of toxic waste. The recommendation comes after Sustainable Infrastructure Australia, a federally-contracted organization, decided there was no facility in Australia that could dispose of the waste in compliance with international treaties.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25075698-30417,00.html>

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The Michigan Network for Children's Environmental Health is a coalition of health professionals, health-affected groups, environmental organizations, and others dedicated to a safe and less toxic world for Michigan's children. Through education, outreach, and advocacy, we seek to protect Michigan's children from adverse impacts caused by exposure to widespread hazardous chemicals. Visit: www.mnceh.org.