

March 6, 2019

Remarks for Public Comment

ACHD Board of Health Meeting
Allegheny County Health Department Administrative Offices
542 Fourth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Thank you for allowing me to comment on today on ACHD's recent enforcement action involving the Mon Valley Works' Clairton Coke Works, Edgar Thomson Works, and the Irvin Works.

On behalf of the Breathe Project, I want to express our thanks to ACHD for exercising its well-documented authority to direct US Steel to stop its practice of emitting levels of sulfur pollution into the air at levels of "grave concern," to quote the department.

According to the February 28, 2019 enforcement order data, before the Christmas Eve explosion, US Steel was releasing 2117 lbs/day of SO₂ into the atmosphere across these three plants – which are all connected because coking gas is used as fuel in to operate ovens and furnaces in all three facilities. That 2117 lbs/day of SO₂, about the weight of a subcompact car, was bad enough before the explosion— the 11,000+ Smell Pittsburgh reports prior to the explosion document how bad this has been.

This number jumped to over 74,100 lbs/day as documented on January 29, 2019. That level is 35 times what it was before the explosion. That is the weight of 3 school buses. Per day.

If these figures are representative of US Steel's actions, this means that these three interconnected plants are emitting the same amount of pollution every 10 days as what it would emit in a year prior to the explosion.

Today is 73 days after the explosion. If ACHD's numbers are representative, this means US Steel has emitted over 7 years' worth of sulfur pollution since the explosion as compared with before the explosion.

US Steel has appealed this decision and asked for a stay, which was granted through March 11. That stay may be allowing US Steel to emit the equivalent of another year's worth of sulfur pollution since the date ACHD issued the order. A hearing pertaining to the stay is set for March 26. That means US Steel may emit the equivalent of an additional 2 and a half years' worth of sulfur pollution since the order was issued.

The order gives US Steel 30 days to comply after any stay is lifted. That is possibly another 3 years' worth of sulfur pollution.

Any other responsible organization would apologize for these egregious harms to the community with rapid dispatch to fixing the problem.

Instead, US Steel has stated that they may fix the problem by May. 70%, whatever that means.

If the emissions levels are representative, then this is a request to be allowed to emit the equivalent of almost 13 years' worth of sulfur pollution in less than 6 months. This is unacceptable and unreasonable.

US Steel's actions must match its words pertaining to its claims of environmental protection. Unfortunately, its actions continue to be delay, appeal, and dump pollution on Mon Valley residents.

It is for these reasons that residents of Clairton have asked for a hot idle situation. It is unfair that the community should bear the equivalent of 13 years' worth of pollution while the company's profits in 2018 were 2.8 times what they were in the prior year. (US Steel reported adjusted net earnings of \$957 million in 2018, up from \$341 million in 2017.)

Actions speak louder than words. Thank you again ACHD for taking action.

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Mehalik, Ph.D.