



North Braddock  
Residents For Our  
Future



**BREATHE  
PROJECT**  
The Air We Share



EMBARGOED UNTIL NOV. 20, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

Nov. 20, 2020

Contact: Debra Smit, Breathe Project  
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### **Allegheny County Residents Call for Action to Address Unhealthy Air Quality This Month**

Pittsburgh, PA – Allegheny County residents will speak out once again this Friday to call on U.S. Steel and County Executive Rich Fitzgerald to take decisive action to address unacceptable air quality exceedances that are harming the health of people. The rally will be virtual.

**Nov. 20, 2020 at 12:30 PM**

**[Clean Water Action Facebook Page](#)**

***Zoom Link Below***

The protest comes after Allegheny County experienced 7 straight days of exceedances of the state standard for hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), a pollutant most closely associated with coking operations, from Nov. 4-10, 2020. The week coincided with increased temperatures and atmospheric temperature inversions that trapped pollution over the region, exacerbating industrial pollution problems. During this time, the concentration of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) exceeded the federal health-based standard for three days in a row at the Liberty monitor in the Mon Valley and two days in a row at the Avalon monitor.

This recent acute pollution episode worsens a year of ongoing chronic pollution from coke oven emissions. So far this year, the H<sub>2</sub>S standard has been exceeded 23 times at the Liberty air quality monitoring site according to preliminary ACHD data.

Cheryl Hurt, a long-time Clairton community activist with Valley Clean Air Now (VCAN), said "U.S. Steel's excessive pollution is hitting our community when we are at our most vulnerable due to the COVID crisis. Like many African-American communities, Clairton has a COVID infection rate 50% higher than the Allegheny County average."

Residents will call on U.S. Steel (USS) and the County Executive to take decisive action regarding environmental performance at its Mon Valley Works Facilities (Clairton Coke Works, Edgar Thomson Works and Irvin Works) because of its impact on Allegheny County and especially Mon Valley residents. In addition:

- USS must take action to voluntarily reduce operations when severe weather is expected to negatively impact air quality and public health.
- USS must significantly reduce its emissions in the Mon Valley during multiday inversion episodes, since PM levels as measured at Liberty were on average three times higher than those measured upwind and exceeded the standard three days in a row in this latest episode. A 50% emissions reduction could eliminate these exceedances entirely.
- USS must make the significant investments in its Mon Valley facilities that it promised in May 2019 in order to secure employment for its workforce and stop the acute pollution episodes during inversion weather events as well as chronic, ongoing pollution episodes from upsets, leaks and failures.
- USS should restore past promises of local investment and focus efforts on ending severe pollution events.
- USS must release publicly its most recent environmental audit as proscribed by the recent settlement agreement with Allegheny County Health Department. The public has a right to know USS's true performance, not just a PR spin about environmental performance.
- The County Executive needs to speak out and show leadership to protect the health of county residents by demanding changes at USS to prevent these periodic, damaging events.

This level of pollution places an unfair burden on the residents of Allegheny, including many who live in environmental justice communities that surround the Clairton Coke Works and Edgar Thompson Steel Works operations. Of immediate concern:

- These incidents are occurring despite an ongoing pandemic where it is well-documented that increased particle pollution results in increased negative impacts on disease prevalence and outcomes.
- A recently published study shows children in Allegheny County living near major pollution sources had nearly triple the prevalence of asthma as compared with the national average rate of asthma in children. (IJAS Journal of Asthma).
- According to the American Lung Association, "First, short-term exposure to particle pollution can kill. Peaks or spikes in particle pollution can last from hours to days. Premature deaths from breathing these particles can occur on the very day that particle levels are high, or within one to two months afterward. Particle pollution does not just make people die a few days earlier than they might otherwise—these deaths would not have occurred so early if the air were cleaner."
- Residents recorded over 1300 bad smelling air complaints on the SmellPGH app during this Nov. 4-10 period of time because of the rotten-egg smell associated with emissions of Hydrogen Sulfide gas from coking operations.

"Even when it's a nice sunny day, U.S. Steel manages to ruin it," says Glassport resident David Meckle. "We have to put up with low-grade headaches, eyes watering and a little burn in the nasal passages. You have to be like a little turtle and go inside and hide. I'm not a turtle and I don't like living in my shell."

"While people were enjoying the warm temperatures, I was forced to stay indoors due to breathing difficulties that week," said Karen Grzyzinski, a longtime resident of Ohio Township who currently lives in the North Boroughs. She was diagnosed with asthma nearly 20 years ago when she lived in Ben Avon when the Shenango Coke Works was in operation. "I couldn't even enjoy time on the porch because after just a few minutes I became congested and experienced the onset of an asthma attack. I attempted a few minutes

outdoors ever day - but the problems persisted. It became quite irritating to me to hear weather forecasters refer to the air quality as hazy. The haze was pollution!"

## Rally Speakers

Myron Arnowitz, Pennsylvania Director, Clean Water Action

Cheryl Hurt - Clairton resident, Valley Clean Air Now

Dave Meckel - Glassport resident, Valley Clean Air Now

Edith Abeyta - North Braddock Residents For Our Future

Video by Mark Dixon of SmellPgh App complaints

Germaine Patterson - Clairton resident, Women for a Healthy Environment/Valley Clean Air Now

Art Thomas, Clairton resident, Valley Clean Air Now

Thaddeus Popovich - Allegheny County Clean Air Now

## Resources

**Breathe Cam Videos during this time/ CreateLab, Carnegie Mellon University**

**Clairton Coke Works, 11-2-2020 starting at 7:45 a.m.**

<https://tinyurl.com/y2dc9mr3>

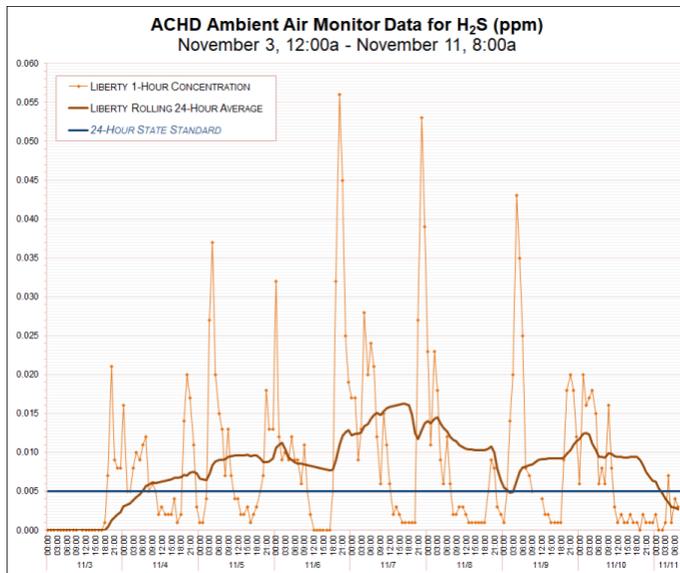
**Edgar Thomson, 11-7-2020, starting at 3:18 p.m.**

<https://tinyurl.com/y3tu7nvt>

**GASP Pgh – [About that Rotten Egg Odor Plaguing Your Neighborhood, What Causes It & How U.S. Steel Can Help \(If It Wanted To\)](#)**

**GASP Pgh – [24-Hour Average Ambient Air Concentration of PM 2.5 \( \$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3\$ \) January 1, 2020 to November 17, 2020](#)**

**GASP Pgh – [ACHD Ambient Air Monitor for Hydrogen Sulfide \(H<sub>2</sub>S\) from Nov. 3 to Nov. 11 2020](#)**



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85119320011?pwd=bk5pTDROa1Q0RnR2ZTlsOGJ1by9vZz09>

Meeting ID: 851 1932 0011

Passcode: 350602

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,85119320011# US (New York)