



U.S. Steel Clairton Coke Works Facts – May 9, 2019

- The Clairton Coke Works is the largest coke plant in the U.S. and has been major source of air pollution in our region for decades.
- The December 24, 2018, explosion and fire destroyed the plant's 100-yard-long building that contained its pollution control equipment that removes oils and sulfur compounds from raw coking gas. [See Breathe Cam video of the fire.](#)
- The plant operated without pollution controls between Dec. 24, 2018 and April 3, 2019. [On April 4, 2019, U.S. Steel announced the pollution control equipment had been repaired.](#)
- During the repair, U.S. Steel diverted and flared raw, untreated coking gas by burning it at the massive, 3-port Peachtree flare above the valley near the connected US Steel Irvin Works in the Mon Valley. Since the repair, [Allegheny County](#) continues to experience bad air quality and on at least 4 days after the repair in 2019 has had the worst air quality EPA-AQI readings in the country.
- The Clairton Coke Works is currently operating outside of its legally required provisions as spelled out in its Title V permit. These provisions require the removal of oils and sulfur compounds from raw coking gas. This means that the plant's emissions are not really being controlled under required legal specifications.
- According to a February 27, 2019 Allegheny County Health Department enforcement order, U.S. Steel was venting nearly 75,000 pounds of sulfur dioxide in a single day—this is the equivalent to the weight of three school buses per day. This is also equivalent to emitting as much sulfur dioxide into the air every 11 days as it was emitting in a year prior to the explosion.
- There have been **402 exceedances of federal standards for sulfur dioxide and fine particles at Mon Valley** monitors since the standards were set in 2006 (for particles) and 2010 (for SO₂). This represents 91% of the exceedances in Allegheny County.
- [Medical professionals in Clairton](#) report evidence of children with higher rates of respiratory distress and asthma as a result of this pollution.
- There are numerous anecdotal reports of people struggling with terrible air quality over this period of time. During the first 90 days of 2019, 53 days were rated as “not-good.”
- Allegheny County is in the top 3 percent of all U.S. counties for risk of cancer caused by air pollution.
- Children in Allegheny County are exposed to higher levels of a number of cancer-causing chemicals – diesel particulate matter, formaldehyde, benzene, arsenic and coke ovens emissions – than most children in the U.S. as a direct result of industrial polluters in the region, according to an analysis by [Environmental Health News](#).
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- [PennFuture](#) launched a [#ToxicNeighbor](#) campaign (March, 2019) against U.S. Steel (billboards and signage) and seeks to shut down batteries 1, 2 and 3 at the plant, as they are the oldest and most polluting while asking U.S. Steel for investments in advanced systems and technology that will ensure better air quality.
- [PennEnvironment and Clean Air Council](#) – joined by the Allegheny County Health Dept. – have sued U.S. Steel alleging that several of the company’s Mon Valley facilities are operating in violation of their Clean Air Act Permits.
- Earthjustice, PennFuture and Sierra Club filed a lawsuit against the EPA on April 15, 2019, for not properly regulating coke ovens emissions across the country, citing pollution at the Clairton Coke Works.
- [Environmental Integrity Project, the Breathe Project and Clean Air Council](#) filed notice to sue U.S. Steel and federal, state and local agencies for alleged failure to report releases of pollutants from three facilities for more than 100 days starting in December.
- Pollution has caused more deaths per year in Allegheny County than homicides and traffic crashes combined. In terms of numbers, it’s about equivalent to the opioid epidemic [Neil Donahue, CMU atmospheric scientist, told a Pittsburgh City Council](#) panel.
- Three of the ten county PM2.5 monitors (Clairton, Liberty, and North Braddock), are ranked in the worst 10 percent nationally, all in proximity to the Clairton Coke Works.
- The Clairton Coke Works is in [Penn Environment’s “Toxic Ten”](#) report, based on the EPA’s Toxic Release Inventory Data.
- Pollution from the Clairton Coke Works affects a large number of people, particularly a large number of low income, elderly, and African American people. According to environmental justice statistics from the [U.S. EPA’s EJ Screen tool](#).
 - Approximately 130,000 people live within a 5-mile radius of the Clairton Coke Works property (5-mile ring centered at 40.318643-79.897805) 1/3 of the people have low income
 - People in this area have air that is worse than 91 percent of the entire country for particulate matter
 - 36 percent are minority population, primarily African American, and 1/5 are older than 64
- [U.S. Steel](#) reported it had tripled its annual profit to \$14.1 billion in January, 2019. The company announced will spend \$1 billion for upgrades to two Mon Valley facilities – with not one penny going to repair the aging batteries at the Clairton Coke Works. It can afford to give the Mon Valley a state-of-the-art operation that doesn't compromise the health of residents.

The Digital Version with links to sources is available at www.breatheproject.org

*The **Breathe Project** is a coalition of more than 28 environmental organizations including citizens, advocates, public health professionals and academics working to improve air quality, eliminate climate pollution and make our region a healthy, prosperous place to live. The collaborative powers the Breathe Project, its community outreach platform.*

