

As a life-long resident of the Mon Valley I remain concerned about the pollution we are forced to breath on a regular basis. We have endured decades of flaring and belching of toxic chemicals into our communities with an unbelievable crescendo occurring during the fire event in December 2018. No matter the situation community residents look to the Allegheny County Health Department to protect our HEALTH. With 'health' as the agency's middle name, it would stand to reason that protecting public health would be the priority.

Let me be clear, we need health protections every day, however, during the days we are exposed to horrific releases from one of the region's – and nation's notoriously chronic polluter – clear, concise and health-based messaging from the ACHD seem to always be missing in action.

Beginning in the pre-dawn hours of Monday, July 4th, 2022, a power outage triggered massive – and nearly day-long emissions at the US Steel Clairton Coke Works. Those events should have triggered an urgent, informed and health-based statement from the Health Department. In fact, the events warranted frequent updates throughout the day. What we got, instead, was a weak statement that ACHD ***believed the July 4th power failure would not, or minimally affect plant emissions.***

Based on what facts? Where was the urgency? Where were the updates to the media and the communities as the emissions and flaring continued for nearly the entire day ... a day when so many outdoor activities were planned. Where were the warnings or suggestions to protect public health during the nearly day-long air pollution event? How could anyone view the Breathe Cam videos that were shared publicly and say those massive plumes of pollution would have NO effect on local residents? That makes no sense! Why does the ACHD fail to fully engage with the public during such horrific events?

Yet again, there appeared to be no extra effort by anyone at the Health Department to, at the very least, issue updated statements urging caution for those living near the plant – particularly for those attending outdoor activities. I saw no updated information provided to residents of Clairton or Mon Valley communities apprising them of the potential for very poor air quality conditions. I saw no messages, particularly for those with compromised health issues, the elderly, pregnant women or babies and young children to consider remaining indoors and away from the emissions that were not fully understood – but continued from dawn until nearly 3:00 pm. **ACHD's silence was deafening.**

It is unconscionable that the Health Department was silent during the two worst emission events caused by failures at the Clairton Coke Works – in 2018 and again in 2022.

Exactly when can we expect the health protections we deserve?

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