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BREATHE PROJECT Statement on Tragedy at USS Clairton Coke Works

- Breathe Project offers its condolences and support for the U.S. Steel Mon Valley Works employees and the Clairton/Mon Valley community for the horrific impact of the explosion that occurred this morning at the Clairton Coke Works facility and the ongoing rescue and safety assessment underway.
- Breathe Project offers its support to our public officials to help provide useful information about the event, including footage of the explosion from our 24/7 Breathe Cams, created by the CREATE Lab/ Breathe Project. [[link](#)].
- Breathe Project calls on federal, state and local agencies with health monitoring capabilities to offer these services to members of the workforce and community who are in proximity to the explosion site and the collapsed building materials that are likely emitting hazardous air pollutants, including asbestos, heavy metals and possibly benzene.
- This is the third major event at this plant in 2025. There was a stack explosion on February 2, 2025. A pollution control room malfunction on June 2-3, 2025 took pollution control equipment offline for an extended period of time. There were no known major documented injuries from these prior two incidents. Unfortunately, the incident today is more dire.

- Many people have been concerned about this facility and the community that hosts it for a long time. Breathe Project, along with community members, have been [calling on corporate and civic leadership so that a process of resolving many years' worth of mistrust from ongoing community harms and broken promises can be addressed](#). For decades, workers and residents across Western Pennsylvania have heard lofty promises from U.S. Steel—many of which are later delayed or abandoned—and often delivered without transparency or meaningful community involvement. (See “[Mon Valley U.S. Steel Pollution Timeline: A History of #brokenpromises](#).”)
- Problems have been ongoing with the facility, piling tragedy upon tragedy. U.S. Steel has paid nearly \$64 million in air pollution [enforcement actions](#), [fines](#) and settlements related to the Mon Valley Works's three facilities since January of 2020 (more than \$900,000 per month on average for the past five and a half years). The company has been assessed over \$7.4 million for these items just since January of 2025; the issues are not getting better, and the [community health impacts](#) are drastic.
- U. S. Steel engaged to evade hazardous air pollution regulations through lobbying and manipulating the U.S. EPA. U.S. Steel spent [\\$990,000 for lobbying](#) in the first quarter of 2025 much of it [in an effort to avoid compliance with national hazardous air pollutant air quality standards](#) for coke ovens and integrated steel facilities. There is no excuse for this evasion of necessary public health protections that were supported by thousands of people testifying publicly in favor of these regulations in a public process.
- U.S. Steel has gotten everything that it wished for in its deal with Nippon. (Tariffs that guarantee a price for steel; commitments to retain the entire workforce at least through 2030; facility operation guarantees through 2035; large capital investments to improve production equipment.) There are no excuses. The company is notorious for making promises and backing away from them.
- \$10.8 billion in commitments to overhaul operations, with at least \$2.4 billion in commitments to the Mon Valley mean that ongoing, egregious harms to workers and emissions violations have zero justification.

- People in proximity to the Clairton Works have air quality that is worse than 96 percent of all monitored regions in the U.S. for fine particles based on the latest 3-year average from U.S. EPA monitored data.
- Real progress will only come when public health and community revitalization are treated as non-negotiable priorities. There have been too many years of promise-breaking and too much emphasis on short-term deflections that continue to perpetuate community health harms and workforce anxiety.

About the Breathe Project

The Breathe Project is a Southwestern Pennsylvania organization that avails itself of top-level health, epidemiological and air quality science and public health information. We are a collaboration of [over 60 organizations](#) working to improve air quality, eliminate climate pollution and make our region a healthy and prosperous place to live. We offer a [communications](#) platform that features [public health reports](#), citizen science [technology tools](#) and organizing support for [local community members](#) and [campaigns](#).