



# Air Toxics Fact Sheet

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- Toxic air pollutants, also known as hazardous air pollutants (HAPS), or air toxics, are pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects.
- Examples of toxic air pollutants include benzene, which is found in gasoline; perchlorethylene, which is emitted from some dry cleaning facilities; and methylene chloride, which is used as a solvent and paint stripper by a number of industries. Examples of other listed air toxics include dioxin, asbestos, toluene, and metals such as cadmium, mercury, chromium, and lead compounds.
  - In total, EPA has designated 187 hazardous air pollutants. They can be found at the following URL: [www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/188polls.html](http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/188polls.html)
- Most air toxics originate from human-made sources such as factories, refineries, and power plants as well as indoor sources (e.g., some building materials and cleaning solvents).
- Mobile sources, including cars and buses, contribute significantly to air toxics levels.
- ACHD's primary air toxics monitoring site is located in downtown Pittsburgh, called "Flag Plaza."
- Data on air toxics levels in Allegheny County and beyond can be found in numerous locations:
  - EPA maintains the Toxic Release Inventory, which requires source of pollution to report all emissions. <http://www.epa.gov/tri/>. ACHD also publishes annual Emissions Inventory reports, found at <http://www.achd.net/air/>.
  - The National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) is EPA's ongoing comprehensive evaluation of air toxics in the U.S. NATA was developed as a screening tool for State, Local and Tribal Agencies to prioritize pollutants, emission sources, and locations of interest for further study in order to gain a better understanding of risks. The latest NATA report was released in early 2011 and is based on 2005 air data. The report can be found on EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/nata/>.
  - ACHD publishes Air Quality Annual Reports each year, which can be found at <http://www.achd.net/air/>. These reports contain monitored data from across the county and multiple-year trends.
- ACHD maintains an Air Toxics Strategic Plan. The goals of the Air Toxics Strategic Plan are to assess and identify the areas within Allegheny County that pose the highest risk to human health due to the exposure to air toxics, identify the specific air toxics and the sources contributing to the increased risks, and implement regulatory and voluntary activities to reduce the air toxic exposure in high-risk areas. The strategic plan is a way for ACHD staff to plan necessary actions to improve areas of interest for air toxics.

- ACHD also has an Asbestos Abatement Program which specifically manages the air toxic commonly found in older building materials and insulation. The program permits asbestos abatement procedures, provides
- ACHD continues to look for and take on opportunities to reduce diesel particulate pollution, a common air toxic, within the County through voluntary opportunities and by providing funding to offset the costs of upgrading equipment.
- There are a number of things individuals can do in regards to air toxics:
  - Stay up to date on the air quality within Allegheny County with the ACHD Annual Air Quality Report. [www.achd.net/air/](http://www.achd.net/air/)
  - Utilize resources such as the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory website, [www.epa.gov/tri/](http://www.epa.gov/tri/) to stay informed of what is going on in your community.
  - Get involved with local environmental groups and local government.
  - Report air quality related industrial issues to ACHD by calling the complaint hotline at 412-687-ACHD.
  - Utilize data from EPA's NATA to determine where a community-driven project to work with industry and reduce air toxics can be useful. [www.epa.gov/nata/](http://www.epa.gov/nata/)