

NEWS RELEASE

**Communities for a Better Environment, WildEarth Guardians Target Poisonous Air Pollution**

*National Lawsuit Filed Over EPA's Failure to Safeguard Public Health and the Environment from Carbon Monoxide*

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*Washington, D.C.*—Communities for a Better Environment and WildEarth Guardians yesterday sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Air Act over its failure to protect Americans from carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas.

“The scary reality is that the EPA has put people across the country at risk from carbon monoxide,” said Shana Lazerow, attorney with Communities for a Better Environment. “Worse, it’s those whose voices are least often heard—poor people and people of color—who stand to suffer most.”

Five years after losing a case brought by Communities for a Better Environment and its allies for failing to update carbon monoxide air quality standards, on August 31, 2011, the EPA decided to leave ambient air quality standards for carbon monoxide unchanged. This, despite a wealth of scientific evidence indicating that stronger standards are needed.

Carbon monoxide is lethal and also contributes to global warming. The current standards, which limit concentrations in the air to no more than 9 parts per million over an eight-hour period, were first adopted in 1971, over 35 years ago and since then, numerous studies have found that these standards are inadequate.

The EPA’s own Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee expressed “its preference for a lower standard,” noting that its concern that the EPA was “underestimating CO [carbon monoxide] exposure among some vulnerable groups, especially persons with low income status.” The Committee stated, “there is consensus in the Panel that the current standards may not protect public health with an adequate margin of safety, and therefore revisions that result in lowering the standards should be considered.” The Committee also found that “there is substantial evidence that CO [carbon monoxide] has adverse effects on climate.”

See June 8, 2010 Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee Review, available at

[http://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/db6b9452a00aa3bd85257242006901de/99283699B101E63D8525773D003DEED9/\\$File/EPA-CASAC-10-013-unsigned.pdf](http://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/db6b9452a00aa3bd85257242006901de/99283699B101E63D8525773D003DEED9/$File/EPA-CASAC-10-013-unsigned.pdf).

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set national ambient air quality standards based solely on what is necessary to protect public health and the environment. Unfortunately, EPA rejected its scientific advisors and instead opted to maintain the status quo.

“We all need the strongest protection possible from this poisonous gas,” said Jeremy Nichols, WildEarth Guardians’ Climate and Energy Program Director. “Sadly, current standards allow our children to be exposed to dangerous levels of carbon monoxide and continue to put our climate at risk.”

Over 70% of all carbon monoxide comes from the burning of fossil fuels and is spewed by smokestacks and tailpipes. Carbon monoxide contributes to cardiovascular problems, nervous system problems, and developmental problems. It also reacts with sunlight to form smog and contributes to climate change.

Communities for a Better Environment and WildEarth Guardians’ lawsuit was filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in Washington, D.C. The filing consists of a one page petition for review, which sets in motion a briefing schedule. A ruling is likely within the next year. The groups are being represented by the University of Denver Sturm College of Law Environmental Law Clinic.

Communities for a Better Environment is a non-profit environmental health and justice advisory organization based in California. Its mission is to achieve environmental health and justice by building grassroots power in and with communities of color and working-class communities.

WildEarth Guardians is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the wildlife, wild places, and wild rivers of the American West. Through its Climate and Energy Program, the group advocates for a transition away from fossil fuels.

The University of Denver, the oldest private university in the Rocky Mountain region, enrolls approximately 11,409 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

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