

## **Virginia Asthma Coalition (VAC), Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH), and the American Lung Association in Virginia**

### ***Joint Position Statement on the Old Dominion Electric Cooperative's Proposed Cypress Creek Coal-Fired Power Plant***

The Virginia Asthma Coalition, the Consortium for Infant and Child Health, and the American Lung Association in Virginia oppose the proposal by Old Dominion Electric Cooperative to build the Cypress Creek coal-fired power plant. The proposed coal plant would contribute to ground level ozone and particulate matter. This would lead to degraded air quality and increased health problems in the affected population, especially persons within a 30-mile radius.

The proposed Cypress Creek Power Station would impede the region's ability to maintain acceptable air quality standards. The health and environmental impacts of air pollutants emitted from power plants are well known and documented. Nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and/or particulate matter acting alone or in combination, for example, present a number of threats to human health and the environment: increases the risk of asthma attacks, emphysema with chronic obstructive bronchitis, infant mortality, lung cancer, heart disease and ischemic strokes.<sup>i</sup> Most critically, these pollutants contribute to the region's unhealthy ozone and particulate air pollution, which places at high risk the people who live nearest to the plant, including low income and minority communities already experiencing health disparities.

Asthma is a significant public health issue, both nationally and in the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions. An estimated 20,000 children and over 60,000 adults in the Richmond area and 40,000 children and over 100,000 adults in the Hampton Roads region, are affected by the disease.<sup>ii,iii</sup> Additionally, over 400,000 adults in Virginia, or 14% of that population group in the state, have asthma.<sup>iv</sup> Pollution from burning coal causes coughing and wheezing, triggers asthma attacks, causes heart attacks and strokes, and even early death.<sup>i,vi</sup> Breathing these pollutants may necessitate an increase in medication, the need to seek medical care more often, and an increase in hospitalization and emergency room use.

The proposed Cypress Creek Power Station could impact more than those with asthma. Pollution from burning coal places at risk: fetuses, infants, children, the elderly, people with other lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), individuals with cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Fetuses, infants and children are especially vulnerable to the neurological impacts from coal plant mercury emissions: developmental delays resulting in reduced IQ; mental retardation; impairment on neuro-developmental scales; and permanent loss of intelligence.<sup>i</sup>

The Old Dominion Electric Cooperative's proposed site for the Cypress Creek Power Station is located near Richmond and Hampton Roads. Both areas already register unsafe ozone levels in violation of standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). If built, the proposed Cypress Creek Power Station would be the largest coal-fired power plant in Virginia emitting 3,070 tons of sulfur dioxide and 1,842 tons of particulate matter annually. In addition, it would contribute to ground level ozone by annually emitting 3,070 tons of nitrogen oxides and 246 tons of volatile organic compounds, both of which are precursors to ozone. It would also be within 15 miles of all the local public schools and

multiple early childhood programs in Surry County, which serve over 1,000 school-age children. The EPA is expected to release new stricter ozone limits later this year. With the construction of this coal-fired power plant and its projected emissions, it will be even more difficult for these particular areas in Virginia to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

In addition to the well-known impacts of ozone, other pollutants from the proposed Old Dominion Electric Cooperative plant would have devastating repercussions. A recent analysis using methodology approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Academy of Sciences assessed the impacts of one other pollutant: fine particulate matter. According to this analysis, conducted for a forthcoming report by the Clean Air Task Force, fine particulate matter over the 60-year life of this plant alone would cause in excess of 1,500 deaths in the Southeast and cost society over \$12 billion.<sup>v</sup> Roughly a third of these impacts would be in Virginia. Furthermore, the burden from this plant would add to the annual adverse health impacts from the existing coal plants in and around our state that cause Virginia to be 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation for coal plant caused mortality.<sup>vi</sup>

The Old Dominion Electric Cooperative has not demonstrated to the public that the 1,500 megawatt output of the proposed plant is necessary, nor have they shown that the demand could not be adequately met through less polluting means.

The Virginia Asthma Coalition, the Consortium for Infant and Child Health and the American Lung Association in Virginia strongly oppose the proposal by Old Dominion Electric Cooperative to build this coal-fired power plant, which would negatively impact the air-quality throughout the region and lead to harmful public health outcomes.

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<sup>i</sup> Physicians for Social Responsibility. "Coal's Assault on Human Health" November 2009.

<http://www.psr.org/resources/coal-assault-on-human-health.html>

<sup>ii</sup> From a sum of the pediatric asthma count of Richmond City, Henrico, Hanover, and Chesterfield Counties according to: American Lung Association Epidemiology and Statistics Unit Research and Program Services. "Estimated Prevalence and Incidence of Lung Disease by Lung Association Territory". January 2010.

<http://www.lungusa.org/finding-cures/our-research/trend-reports/estimated-prevalence.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> From a sum of the pediatric asthma count of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Gloucester County, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Southampton County, Surry County and York County according to: American Lung Association Epidemiology and Statistics Unit Research and Program Services. "Estimated Prevalence and Incidence of Lung Disease by Lung Association Territory". January 2010.

<http://www.lungusa.org/finding-cures/our-research/trend-reports/estimated-prevalence.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> American Lung Association, Epidemiology and Statistics Unit. "Trends in Asthma Morbidity and Mortality", February 2010

<http://www.lungusa.org/finding-cures/our-research/trend-reports/asthma-trend-report.pdf>

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<sup>v</sup> Analysis conducted for the Clean Air Task Force by MSB Energy Associates using the health impacts estimator tool developed by Abt Associates. Available upon request.

<sup>vi</sup> Clean Air Task Force: 2010 Toll from Coal

[http://www.catf.us/coal/problems/power\\_plants/existing/map.php?state=Virginia](http://www.catf.us/coal/problems/power_plants/existing/map.php?state=Virginia)