



Center for Health, Environment & Justice

PRESS RELEASE

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EPA Finds Manganese & Other Metals Polluting Air Outside Two TN Elementary Schools

Long-Term Health Risks to Children Include Reproductive & Neurological Disorders

Falls Church, VA – The Environmental Protection Agency has posted the preliminary sets of air toxics monitoring data from two elementary schools in Tennessee. The EPA has been monitoring outdoor air at these schools for the past 60 days as part of the schools monitoring initiative. EPA launched this project in March in response to growing concern over toxic air pollution in schools following an investigative report by [USA Today](#).

EPA monitored [Ashland City Elementary](#) School in Ashland City, TN and [Lakeview Elementary](#) School in New Johnsonville, TN for manganese and other metals. Manganese is a metal commonly used in manufacturing that affects the central nervous and reproductive systems. The results are currently being analyzed to determine the potential long-term health risks of manganese exposure. EPA will release the analysis in six weeks.

“Manganese is a neurotoxin that attacks the central nervous system, making it particularly dangerous for developing children and infants. Manganese crosses the placenta, disrupting brain development *in utero* and is passed to the infant through the mother’s breast milk. Young children, particularly the children in preschool and lower grades offered at both elementary schools, are still in an important phase of their neurodevelopment. There have been no studies to determine safe exposure levels for young children,” stated Stephen Lester, Science Director at the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ).

EPA will be monitoring 60 other schools in 22 states over the course of the summer. Many of these schools have been selected based on proximity to known sources of pollution. EPA is concurrently working on developing school siting guidelines to assist local school districts in selecting safe sites for new schools. “EPA’s school monitoring program highlights the urgent need for comprehensive school siting guidelines to be adopted at the state level. Elementary schools should not be built so close to sources of pollution that young children are being exposed to toxic chemicals,” said Renée Blanchard, Campaign Coordinator for CHEJ’s [safe schools initiative](#).

“As a mother, a safe exposure is no exposure. Children are uniquely susceptible to neurotoxins like manganese. They breathe more air per pound of bodyweight than adults and their developing brains are more vulnerable. How can we send children to schools and expect them to learn when they are exposed to toxins that cause learning disabilities and behavioral disorders?” asked Lois Gibbs, CHEJ

Executive Director. “We can’t wait for more analysis or studies. We need to reduce manganese emissions near Ashland City and Lakeview Elementary Schools immediately. Our children are not science projects to experiment on.”

About CHEJ

The Center for Health, Environment & Justice exists to mentor the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm in as many ways, and for as many people, as possible. We believe this can happen when people and groups have the power to play an integral role in promoting human health and environmental integrity. CHEJ’s role is to provide the tools, the direction, and the encouragement to these people and groups, so that they can build strong, healthy communities where they live, work, learn, shop, play and pray. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for the people living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 in order to continue mentoring others seeking to prevent harm. CHEJ provides mentoring assistance to communities, homeowners, families and individuals throughout the country. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Currently, CHEJ is mentoring community groups in Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Ohio. Details on CHEJ’s efforts to help people and communities prevent harm can be found at <http://chej.org/> .