



**National Tribal Environmental Council
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To Tribal Air Professionals and concerned citizens:

The National Tribal Environmental Council (NTEC) Air Program invites Tribes, Tribal Environmental personnel, and interested parties to attend a public meeting on March 11, 2004, in Denver, Colorado. The meeting will focus upon the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed rule on mercury emissions at coal-burning power plants. The proposed ruling is under a sixty-day public comment period, which has a court-ordered deadline of March 31, 2004.

The proposed rule focuses on power plant emissions. After it's emitted into the air, mercury falls back to Earth in rain, seeping into lakes and streams. There is overwhelming evidence that mercury builds up in the fatty tissues of fish and other aquatic wildlife with the potential to climb the food chain to humans. Exposure to high levels of mercury can be deadly. At lower levels, mercury exposure has been linked to nervous system problems in children, and reproductive and cardiovascular problems in adults. The EPA has determined that major areas of concern are the Midwest and Eastern United States. Potential "hot spots" however, do exist throughout the country—including Indian Country. Under the proposed rule's "cap and trade" system, non-compliant companies would be able to purchase pollution "credits" from companies that meet EPA limits. This proposed system does raise questions for Tribes and Indian Country.

The Environmental Protection Agency is flying technical and informational staff to the public meeting. The design of the public meeting is to help Tribes better understand the rule and to prepare Tribes to provide the EPA with comments on the rule. While Tribes are encouraged to come prepared to provide comments to the EPA on the mercury rule, this is not a public hearing.

Because the deadline for public comment is mandated under court order, the deadline is highly unlikely to be extended. Therefore, NTEC and the EPA want to move quickly on holding this meeting before the March 31, 2004, deadline. It is proposed that the meeting take place in Denver, Colorado, on March 11, 2004. The meeting is tentatively set to be held at the EPA regional offices in Denver.

NTEC wants your support, so please contact us for more information and general questions. Also, if you are interested in attending, please contact NTEC as soon as possible. The NTEC web page shall have the latest information. www.ntec.org.

Questions or comments shall be directed to J. Stephen Hartsfield, Operations Coordinator, National Tribal Air Association. 505-242-2175 or shartsfield@ntec.org.

Respectfully Submitted

J. Stephen Hartsfield