

**Statement by Austin Pediatrician Dr. Don Williams**  
**Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)**  
**Press Conference at Texas State Capitol, January 6, 2010**

Hello. I'm Dr. Don Williams. I am a Pediatric Hospital Doctor here in Austin, and I'm also a board member of Austin PSR.

As a physician, I am always pleased when we take steps as a community to improve our overall health, and so I am here today to recognize the importance of the EPA's [expected] announcement of a new ozone rule. This new rule will encourage our public officials to make energy choices that not only promote a cleaner environment and better quality of life, but will improve our health as well. We know that the more we invest in energy efficiency and renewables such as wind and solar, the healthier we all will be.

These healthy choices contrast with the unhealthy choice of coal-burning power plants, which amount to nothing less than a public health threat. Texas has more than our fair share of coal plants, and there are plans for more. This new ozone rule is just the latest in a long line of reasons why we cannot afford more of the same.

Ozone, which is a component of smog, is formed when nitrogen oxides react with other chemicals, and coal-burning power plants are the number one industrial source of nitrogen oxides in Texas. Ozone is quite irritating to lung tissue, and multiple studies have shown a significant role in worsening or even causing lung diseases like asthma. You certainly don't have to be a doctor to know that brown haze is not good for your lungs. As a hospital doctor, I see children with asthma nearly every day. While attacks are sometimes brought on by allergies or viruses, the quality of our air also plays a big role, and it's virtually the only factor with asthma that we, as a society, have the power to control.

In addition to ozone, coal plants produce sulfur dioxides, particulate matter (or soot), and mercury. These pollutants play a role in the development of emphysema, chronic bronchitis, lung cancer, heart attacks, and strokes.

Recent reports indicate that in Texas, over 1,100 premature deaths and nearly 34,000 asthma attacks per year are due to particle pollution. Nationally, there are more deaths from pollution than from drunk driving OR murders.

We at Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility hope we can shift our priorities towards energy efficiency and alternative, non-polluting, sources of energy such as wind and solar power. We also believe that the best way to minimize pollution and maximize public health is by removing the toxic emissions of coal-burning power plants.

References:

"Coal's Assault on Human Health" <http://www.psr.org/resources/coals-assault-on-human-health.html> by 2010 study by Physicians for Social Responsibility

'Dirty Air, Dirty Power' <http://www.catf.us/publications/view/24> a study by the Clean Air Task Force, now a project of Pew Charitable Trust.

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