



CONNECTICUT'S MANAGEMENT OF TOXIC AIR POLLUTANTS

PREPARED BY THE BUREAU OF AIR MANAGEMENT

Background Information on Air Toxics

A wide variety of substances are classified as toxic (or hazardous) air pollutants. The exact compounds and substances included in this category are determined by the various state and federal regulations that address these materials, as well as their potential adverse health effects. Toxic air pollutants may be released naturally or through human activities. Toxic air pollutants can exist as particulate matter or as gases.

Toxic pollutants, such as benzene or chromium, present serious threats to human health and the environment. Exposure to toxic pollutants may yield various acute (short-term) and/or chronic (long-term) effects in humans. Acute effects include eye irritation, nausea, or difficulty breathing. Chronic effects include damage to the respiratory or nervous systems, birth defects, reproductive effects or cancer. The type and severity of the effect is determined by the toxicity of the pollutant, the quantity of the pollutant, the duration and frequency of exposure, and the general health and level of resistance or susceptibility of the person exposed.

In addition, toxic air pollutants can have indirect effects on human health through deposition onto soil or into lakes and streams, potentially affecting ecological systems and eventually human health through consumption of contaminated food.

Toxic air pollution is a health concern both in the vicinity of the emitting source and beyond. Toxic pollutants emitted from a source may be transported by the air far from the source to diverse areas of the world. As a result, local air toxic pollution may be the product of, or be aggravated by, both local sources of air toxics and more distant sources.

[Table of Contents](#) | [Air Toxics Sources](#)

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