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EPA has failed to update hazardous air pollution rules for years, needs to do its job and protect Wisconsinites from toxic air pollution by setting up-to-date standards.

MADISON - Clean Wisconsin, along with three other environmental groups, filed a federal lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Wednesday for missing legally required deadlines to protect public health from toxic air pollution.

“Hazardous air pollutants present a great danger to public health, yet EPA is asleep at the wheel,” says Katie Nekola, general counsel for Clean Wisconsin. “EPA has a legal obligation to update toxic air pollution standards every eight years; for certain industries, they have not done so since 2002.”

To protect public health and safety, the Clean Air Act requires EPA to regularly review the health and environmental hazards faced by people who live near major industrial sources, as well as the available pollution control developments. EPA is years overdue in fulfilling its legal duty to protect people from 21 industrial sources of toxic air pollution, such as chemical companies, metals and plastics operations, and municipal landfills, including some sources located in Wisconsin.

Filed in federal district court in Washington, D.C., the groups bringing this lawsuit, including Clean Wisconsin, Blue Ridge Environmental Council, Sierra Club and Midwest Environmental Defense Center, represent communities exposed to toxic emissions. Together, they are asking a federal court to ensure EPA finally completes rulemakings to strengthen national health protections which are especially needed to protect the health of people in Wisconsin.

“These rulemakings are needed to provide an ample margin of safety to protect public health and make sure no local communities are left behind as pollution reduction methods advance,” says Nekola.

Exposure to hazardous air pollutants emitted by industries covered by this lawsuit can cause serious human health effects, including reproductive disorders and cancer. Many major sources of industrial air pollution are located in areas where people are already overburdened with environmental contamination.

“After years of delay, the EPA needs to do its job and protect Wisconsinites from toxic air pollution by setting up-to-date standards,” says Nekola. “That’s why we are working to make sure the people of Wisconsin get the basic clean air protections that everyone deserves.”

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On behalf of its more than 30,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects and preserves Wisconsin's clean air, water and natural heritage. 608-251-7020, www.cleanwisconsin.org .