

WBR ARTICLE

Coal mine air pollution targeted

By Business Report Staff

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a petition presented to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson today, a coalition of environmental groups called for new controls over coal mine air pollution.

The petition states that coal mines should be held to the Clean Air Act standards currently in force for gravel mines, coal-fired power plants, coal processing plants and other sources. Currently, the petition notes, no national limits exist on air pollution from coal mines.

The petition also calls on Jackson to adopt strict limits on other dangerous air pollutants released from coal mines, including methane, particulate matter, nitrogen oxide gases and volatile organic compounds — all toxic air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

According to the petition, nitrogen oxides are an especially visible example of the problem. Blasting at strip mines, such as those in the Powder River Basin, produce dense, orange clouds of nitrogen oxides.

No standards currently limit such pollution from coal mines. Instead, signs posted along public highways warn of orange clouds, advising people to “avoid contact.”

“Coal mines have gotten a free pass for far too long,” said Kassie Siegel with the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s essential to establish these common sense rules to reduce air pollution from coal mines — including closed mines no longer producing coal — while we transition as rapidly as possible away from reliance on dirty, dangerous, coal-fired power.”

The petition was formulated by Earthjustice, WildEarth Guardians, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Environmental Integrity Project and the Sierra Club.

To read the full petition:

http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/climate_law_institute/global_warming_litigation/clean_air_act/pdfs/Coal_Mine_Petition-06-15-2010.pdf.

Comment from Wyoming's coal companies was not available at presstime.