



News releases

(/rss)

Date

ShareThis

Lead emissions at 20,000 U.S. airports threaten community health

Posted Sep. 1, 2016 / Posted by: Kate Colwell

Evidence linking ill-health to airborne lead emissions requires swift action from the EPA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new report documents how small airplanes at 20,000 U.S. airports still emit toxic lead. Aviation fuel currently accounts for 50 percent of all airborne lead emissions and the Environmental Protection Agency has said there is no safe level of lead exposure.

Lead, one of the most toxic chemicals in our environment, was phased out of automobile gasoline more than 20 years ago, but many U.S. airports currently traffic planes that still run on leaded fuel. The EPA estimates (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-04-28/pdf/2010-9603.pdf>) that sixteen million people reside and three million children attend school near these airports.

The new report (<http://www.foe.org/aviation-emissions>) from Friends of the Earth, authored by Center for Environmental Health, "Myths & Realities of Leaded Aviation Fuel," catalogues the current use of leaded aviation fuel, or "avgas," by piston-engine aircraft such as small propeller planes and some helicopters, the gaps in regulations, and proposed policy solutions. Unleaded aviation gasoline has been FAA approved and available for use since the 1980s.

"We've been trying to get the EPA to remove lead from avgas since we discovered the fact in 2003," said **Marcie Kever**, legal director for Friends of the Earth. "Given the widespread public understanding of the grave health effects of lead exposure, it is appalling that this toxic pollution stream continues to harm our communities. We urge the EPA to take immediate action to curb the single largest source of lead emissions in the U.S. today."

Lead is highly toxic and causes a variety of adverse health effects; at low exposure levels, it can cause learning disabilities, lower IQ levels, increased blood pressure and nerve damage; at high levels of exposure, it can lead to brain damage and death. Lead puts children at especially high risk because they absorb larger amounts and are more sensitive to lead-induced toxicity. Lead exposure presents a particular danger to the development of children's nervous systems.

The report findings and action toolkit for aviators and policy makers is available at [foe.org/aviation-emissions](http://www.foe.org/aviation-emissions) (<http://www.foe.org/aviation-emissions>).

###

Expert contact: Marcie Kever, (510) 900-3144, mkeever@foe.org (<mailto:mkeever@foe.org%20>)

Communications contact: Kate Colwell, (202) 222-0744, kcolwell@foe.org (<mailto:kcolwell@foe.org>)

Categories: [Climate And Energy \(/News/Archives/Category/Climate+And+Energy\)](#), [Legal \(/News/Archives/Category/Legal\)](#), [News Releases \(/News/Archives/Category/News+Releases\)](#) / Tags: [Avgas \(/News/News-Releases/Tag/Avgas\)](#)

« [Back to main page \(/news/news-releases\)](#)