Health Impacts of Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth
I Love Mountains Day
2012
I Love Mountains Day

Tuesday, February 14

9:00 am - noon – Optional Lobbying, Room 111

Noon – Gather on the Capitol Steps in Frankfort

12:00 - 12:30 – Music

12:30 – Rally & March
I Love Mountains Day

- We’ll bring 1,200 pinwheels for the Governor representing:
- 60,000 additional people living with cancer linked to mountain-top removal. (Each pinwheel represents 50 people).
- Hope for a clean energy future.
I Love Mountains Day

To learn more & register to attend at: www.kftc.org/love

Join in the conversation during the day on Twitter: #lovemountains

Or follow the live-blog at: www.kftc.org/blog

For more info contact Carissa Lenfert: carissa@kftc.org
Health Impacts of Mountaintop Removal
The Appalachian Region is rich in history, culture, & biodiversity.
Mountaintop removal is extensive and destructive.
Mountaintop removal blasts the tops off mountains and doesn’t replace them as they were.

Image copyright: Dobree Adams
More than 200 mountains in Kentucky have been destroyed by mountaintop removal practices.
600,000 acres have been surface mined by mountaintop removal in Kentucky, more than any other state.
Mining waste is dumped into headwater streams.

The coal industry calls this a “valley fill.”
Mountaintop removal causes irreversible damage.

According to the journal Science:

“Current attempts to regulate MTM/VF practices are inadequate.”

“There is a preponderance of scientific evidence that impacts are pervasive and irreversible.”
Mountaintop removal causes irreversible damage.

According to the journal *Science*:

“[G]roundwater samples from domestic supply wells have higher levels of mine-derived chemical constituents than well water from unmined areas. Human health impacts may come from contact with streams or exposure to airborne toxins and dust...Elevated levels of airborne, hazardous dust have been documented around surface mining operations. Adult hospitalizations for chronic pulmonary disorders and hypertension are elevated as a function of county-level coal production, as are rates of mortality; lung cancer; and chronic heart, lung, and kidney disease.”
The health impacts of coal extraction and mountaintop removal are real.

Sandy Voils of Clay County, and her daughter.
The health impacts of coal extraction and mountaintop removal are real.

Beverly May of Wilson Creek, Floyd County
Scientific research shows health impacts.

References:


“The health of people living in surface mining regions of the Central Appalachians is compromised by mining activities.”

Increased Cancer Rates
Mountaintop removal is linked to increased cancer rates.

Interviewers went door-to-door in West Virginia, in a mountaintop removal mining community and a non-mining community.

Mountaintop removal is linked to increased cancer rates.

The cancer rate in a central Appalachian community without mountaintop removal mining was 9.4%, compared to a rate of 14.4% in a community with mountaintop removal.

Among the 1.2 million American citizens living in mountaintop removal mining counties in central Appalachia, this 5% difference would translate to an additional 60,000 cases of cancer linked to strip-mining practice.

Mountaintop removal is linked to increased cancer rates.

“This significantly higher risk was found after control for age, sex, smoking, occupational exposure and family cancer history. The study adds to the growing evidence that mountaintop mining environments are harmful to human health.”

—Dr. Michael Hendryx.

Increased Birth Defect Rates
Mountaintop removal is linked to significantly higher birth defect rates.

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The researchers looked at 1.8 million live birth records, determining if the birth mother lived in a county with mountaintop removal mining, other mining, or no mining.

Nationally, birth defects occur in about 1 in 33 births.

The study found: In counties with mountaintop removal mining, the rate of birth defects was 42% higher than counties without mountaintop removal.

Mountaintop removal is linked to significantly higher birth defect rates.

The study looked at two time periods:

- From 1996-1999, birth defect rates were 13% higher.
- From 2000-2003, birth defect rates were 42% higher.

The study found: Disparities in birth defects have become more pronounced as mountaintop mining has expanded.

Increased Public Health Costs
Coal extraction and use—including mountaintop removal—increases public health costs.

In terms of human health, a study by Dr. Paul Epstein estimates $74.6 billion a year in public health burdens in Appalachian communities, with a majority of the impact resulting from increased healthcare costs, injury and death.

The costs from the mining, processing, transport, and combustion of coal affect individuals, families, communities, ecological integrity, and the global climate.

We Have a Vision
We are working for...

Safe and secure jobs for our coal miners today

Strong protections for our mountains, mountain communities, forests, water, air, and culture

A transition plan for coalfield workers and communities to a new economy

Investment in safe & clean energy, and no further subsidies for coal
What You Can Do
What You Can Do

- Attend I Love Mountains Day
- Visit www.kftc.org/health-and-mtr
- Send your KY Legislator a copy of the Health Impacts fact-sheet
- Ask him/her to co-sponsor the Stream Saver Bill and the Clean Energy Opportunity Act
What You Can Do

If you live outside Kentucky, contact your Representative and Senators, asking them to support:

- The Clean Water Protection Act
- The Appalachia Restoration Act

www.kftc.org/health-and-mtr