

Lung Association Lies

It's time to clear the air. Pittsburgh Pennsylvania has clean air and it's significantly cleaner than it was even a decade ago. Good job Steel City.

But wait a minute. How can this be true? Didn't the latest report from the American Lung Association says that Pittsburgh had some of the most polluted air of all major U.S. cities? Well... yes, it did. But the American Lung Association is lying. That's right. I said it. They're lying.

The people of Pittsburgh have put up with this nonsense from the ALA for far too long, and it's time it stopped.

Here's the real story. Years ago... when the Steel City was earning its name literally producing the support beams that built America, the air was pretty bad. Making all that steel required the burning of enormous amounts of coal and the technology of the day was crude. Coal dust filled the air for miles around. Those polluted days have been gone for decades.

But, you wouldn't know it from reading the headlines generated by the American Lung Association's annual "State of the Air" report. The ALA ranked the 12-County Pittsburgh Region as eighth worst of 187 regions for annual particulate matter pollution. While the ranking may or may not be true, it's highly misleading to suggest Pittsburgh's air is dirty. By historical standards, it's far cleaner now than it has been since prior to the industrial revolution.

Consider the government's standards for what constitutes dirty air. In 1971, under the Clean Air Act, the critical level for particulate pollution was set at 75 micrograms per cubic meter. In 1997 that level was lowered dramatically to 15 and in 2012 it was lowered again to 12.

In the latest report, the Pittsburgh region got a failing grade because three of 29 readings registered an air quality slightly above the 12-microgram threshold. Only a single monitor was out of compliance in Allegheny County and it is near U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works plant. The County has fined U.S. Steel more than \$1 million for violations and is pressing hard for bigger improvements to be made quickly.

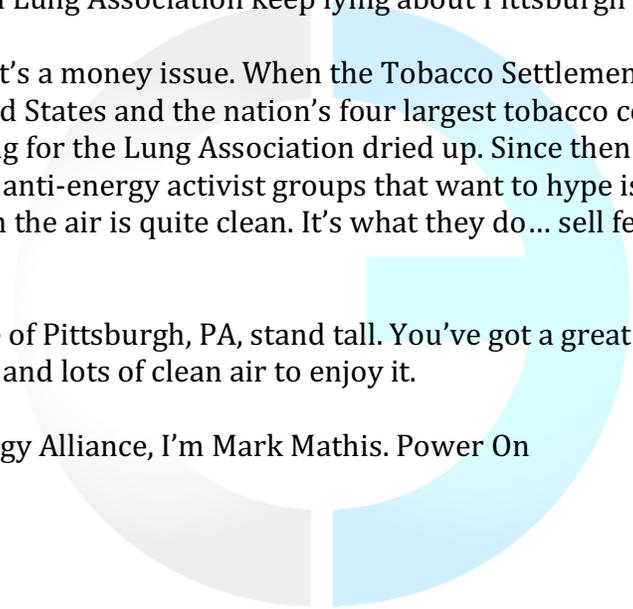
The Allegheny Institute, a Public Policy organization in Pittsburgh, was outraged by the Lung Association's report. In a scathing rebuke, the Institute said, "This amounts to deliberately and falsely labeling the region as out of compliance." And, "There is no excuse for this statistical and reportorial malpractice." The Allegheny Institute provided important context, explaining that the two monitors with three readings marginally out of compliance show a reduction in particulate matter pollution of 35 and 38 percent over only a decade. The average of all readings for the 12-county area was only 9.9, well below the critical level of 12.

Pittsburgh, like all of America, is a case study in how dramatically cleaner our air has gotten over the past 40 years. Take a look at the EPA's air quality data meter for Pittsburgh over the past quarter-century. Notice how it has gotten a lot more green as time has gone on. The improvement is remarkable, which begs the question. Why does the American Lung Association keep lying about Pittsburgh's air?

Like most things, it's a money issue. When the Tobacco Settlement was made between the United States and the nation's four largest tobacco companies 20 years ago, a lot of funding for the Lung Association dried up. Since then the ALA has found new funding from anti-energy activist groups that want to hype issues like dirty air... when in truth the air is quite clean. It's what they do... sell fear, and it's a shame.

Hey, proud people of Pittsburgh, PA, stand tall. You've got a great city with an honorable history and lots of clean air to enjoy it.

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis. Power On



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