

# HIGHWOOD'S AIR PERMIT IS A SHAM

## TELL DEQ TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH, NOT A COAL PLANT'S PROFITS

In May, the Montana Board of Environmental Review told DEQ that the Highwood Generating Station (HGS) must control fine particulates. These particles are so small that they can lodge deep in the lungs and pose a very serious danger to public health.

In February, a federal court threw out the Bush Administration's sham rule for mercury from coal-fired power plants. That means that coal plants, like Highwood, are supposed to install control technologies to capture their hazardous air pollutants before they go into the air. Coal plants emit dozens of different hazardous air pollutants like mercury, lead, radionuclides, chromium, arsenic, hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric acid, antimony, benzene, beryllium, cadmium, cobalt, manganese, nickel, selenium, and many, many more.

As a result of these two decisions, Southern Montana Electric, the developer of HGS, had to submit a permit application to DEQ showing how it was going to comply with the laws for fine particulates (particles that are 2.5 microns or smaller – PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and hazardous air pollutants. The DEQ issued a draft decision on that application on September 29th. The public has 30 days to comment on the draft permits.

### **SME COOKED THE BOOKS ON ITS HAZARDOUS AIR POLLUTION ANALYSIS**

SME proposed placing more stringent limits on two hazardous air pollutants so it could avoid complying with the law for all of the other hazardous air pollutants. But just to make sure it could comply with these more stringent limits it asked DEQ if it could keep its previous monitoring schedule for those two pollutants – which is once every 5 years! DEQ agreed and is now permitting Highwood to monitor its emissions of hazardous air pollutants every 5 years – a schedule that fails to ensure compliance with the new stricter federal standards.

### **POLITICS UNDERMINES CONTROLS FOR FINE PARTICULATES**

Even more disturbing is what happened with PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Originally, DEQ conducted an honest and rigorous review of technologies to control small particles from HGS. DEQ issued a draft decision on August 15, 2008. Shortly thereafter, however, SME met with the Governor's Office and top DEQ officials but did not include the DEQ staff person who had conducted the rigorous technology review. Within weeks DEQ had reversed course and decided SME did not need any new technology to control these dangerous fine particulates.

### **TELL DEQ TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC:**

- Highwood should control its hazardous air pollutants. It's not fair to make those living downwind suffer for years to come so that SME can save a few bucks. Public health is too important and these pollutants are too dangerous to just ignore. The public will pay the price if SME cuts corners. DEQ should make SME do an honest analysis of hazardous air pollutants and install state-of-the-art pollution control technology.
- DEQ should go back to its original proposal and make SME install controls for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. The technology exists and is cost effective. Fine particulates are too dangerous to keep ignoring. Insist that SME install real controls for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Asthma, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illnesses inflict costs on individuals, families, and communities. DEQ should be protecting the public's health and our pocketbooks, not letting SME get away with passing these costs onto the rest of us through increased health care bills.

- Monitoring for hazardous air pollutants should occur every few months, not every five years. The monitoring schedule guarantees that the public and DEQ will be in the dark about what is really coming out of the stack on a daily basis. We know that coal is dirty and that coal emissions impact public health. We should know that SME is following the rules all the time, not just one day out of every 1,825 days.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

1. Attend DEQ's public meeting in Great Falls, on Wednesday, October 29, at 6 p.m. in the Civic Center, Missouri Room, Room 213.
2. Submit written comments by November 5. Send them to: DEQ, ARMB, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620

For more information contact MEIC at 406-443-2520.