

Major Investors Call on EPA to Regulate Coal Ash

by Timothy B. Hurst on September 16, 2010



Coalition of institutional investors urges EPA to get tough on coal ash

As EPA public hearings get underway in Chicago on proposed coal ash regulations, 22 institutional investors representing \$240 billion in assets delivered a letter to the EPA calling for federally-enforceable regulations governing coal ash disposal to prevent costly environmental and public health impacts.

In the public comment letter submitted yesterday coordinated by Green Century Capital Management and corporate social responsibility advocacy firm, **As You Sow**, the investors highlight the financial assurance requirement in the proposed regulations as a key step to assist shareholders in understanding the financial risks associated with coal ash.

Coal ash is a by-product of burning coal that contains arsenic, mercury, lead and other toxins filtered out of smokestacks by pollution control equipment. The toxins in coal ash have been linked to cancer, organ failure, and other serious health problems.

Massive quantities of coal ash are generally stored in landfills or impoundment ponds, such as the one operated by TVA that failed in 2008. Those ponds and landfills are subject to less consistent regulation than landfills accepting household trash.

"The catastrophic coal ash spill at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) pond in December 2008 demonstrated that current regulations are not enough to mitigate environmental and financial risk for utilities and their shareholders," write the investors.

"There is documented evidence of coal ash contamination from leaching or spillage at over 67 different sites in the U.S.," says Emily Stone, Shareholder Advocate at Green Century. "Lax regulation of coal ash means companies often do the bare minimum to comply with the regulations that exist, and unfortunately this can lead to serious environmental and health risks. We need consistent, federally-enforceable regulations that bring all companies up to best practice," said Stone.