

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 22, 2016

Dr. Tom Frieden, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dr. Patrick Breysse, PhD
Director
Agency for Toxic Substances and
Disease Registry
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Directors Frieden and Breysse:

We request your immediate assistance in responding to the public health risks identified by the discovery of hotspots of dangerously high levels of airborne heavy metals in Portland, Oregon. These levels of arsenic, cadmium, chromium, and other toxins are thought to be linked to emissions from manufacturing facilities located in densely populated urban areas and in close proximity to multiple schools. Our communities are rightfully concerned about this situation.

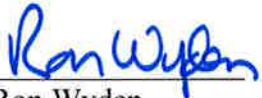
We ask you assist the State of Oregon and Multnomah County, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency and others, by providing resources to better understand the health effects associated with exposure to these hazardous pollutants.

As you know, air tests around one manufacturing facility in Southeast Portland revealed levels of cadmium and arsenic that are, respectively, 49 and 159 times the air-safety benchmark levels established by Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality. More recently, updated contamination maps show several other hotspots for arsenic and cadmium, as well as elevated levels of lead and nickel throughout the Portland metro area.

Immediate assessment of the extent of these pollutants and their associated health risks is urgently needed. There is a concerning lack of data on the localized concentration of these contaminants and the length of time residents may have been exposed. Please collaborate with the State of Oregon and Multnomah County's efforts to conduct exposure screenings for residents, perform soil tests, establish a centralized system for tracking health incidents and test results, better understand methods for soil decontamination, and address other public health management needs. We ask that you deploy a team of public health professionals to Oregon to work closely with state and local authorities.

The results of these risk assessments and what they mean for public health should be communicated in a timely and transparent manner to the public. We look forward to working with you to address this public health issue in Oregon.

Sincerely,


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress