

# Rachel's Environment & Health News

## #11 - Smokers Endanger Their Spouses And Their Children, Study Shows

February 08, 1987

A study of passive smoking by an expert committee of the National Research Council says that infants, young children and spouses of smokers are clearly at a health risk because of their exposure to secondhand smoke. The study, commissioned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Health and Human Services, said children exposed to smoke at home suffered significantly more respiratory infections and chronic ear infections and are more likely to wheeze, cough and produce phlegm.

According to the report, passive smoking in childhood may permanently stunt growth and lung development and might possibly increase the risk of pulmonary disease as an adult. The committee said that according to the best data available, nonsmoking spouses of smokers are 30% more likely to contract lung cancer than are nonsmokers married to nonsmokers, which may account for as many as 2,400 deaths from lung cancer each year in the U.S.

--Peter Montague

=====

### U.S. URGES OTHER NATIONS' BAN ON USE OF CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS

The U.S. in late 1986 urged an international conference in Geneva, Switzerland to consider steps to freeze and eventually eliminate production of chlorofluorocarbons and other gases that deplete the atmospheric ozone shield that protects the earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Experts from 40 nations and 14 non-governmental agencies gathered to discuss the uses of chlorofluorocarbons and how to limit them. Chlorofluorocarbons are banned in the U.S. and Canada, but production worldwide increased annually by 7% in 1983 and 1984 (thus doubling every 10 years), and now totals about 600,000 tons per year. Twenty countries have signed and 8 (including the U.S.) have ratified the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

--Peter Montague

=====

### EPA ISSUES FINAL 'BUBBLE' RULES ALLOWING 'BANKING' AND 'TRADING' OF AN AREA'S POLLUTERS' RIGHTS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in late 1986 issued final guidelines for the trading, buying or selling of allowances to pollute the air. The agency will allow specific sources of pollution to exceed limits specified by the Clean Air Act, or even increase their emissions, if they can reduce other sources of pollution within a given area. Under the guidelines, all air pollution from all sources from a given industrial plant, or from different polluters over a county-wide area, will be regarded as being enclosed in a giant "bubble" and polluters will be allowed to balance their emissions against those of nearby plants. This means a plant can buy a less expensive plant and close it if that is cheaper than buying and installing the equipment necessary to reduce its own emissions to legal levels.

--Peter Montague

=====

### FAR WEST IS NOT THE ONLY PLACE RUNNING OUT OF WATER; LONG ISLAND FACES SAME PROBLEM

Long Island (NY) officials say the rapid use and pollution of Long Island's water supply may cause widespread water shortages in 10 to 15 years. Three vast, layered aquifers, believed to contain about 60 trillion gallons, supply the Island's water. The top layer contains the Glacial Aquifer, undrinkable because it is so contaminated. The Magothy Aquifer, the middle layer, is the widest and largest source

of water. The deepest layer, the Lloyd, is a protected area, reserved only for emergencies. In Sept. 1986, the State Department of Environmental Conservation announced a series of limits, effective Jan. 1987, on the amount of water that Nassau County suppliers can pump from the aquifers. Builders and water suppliers say the state-imposed limits are forcing water suppliers to limit development by determining which proposed projects they could supply with water and will severely hurt Long Island's economy and result in layoffs of thousands of construction workers.

--Peter Montague

=====

### UNION CARBIDE SAYS INDIA FAILED TO REGULATE UNION CARBIDE, THUS BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR BHOPAL

The Union Carbide Corporation in Dec., 1986, while continuing to deny liability, filed a countersuit against the government of India and the State of Madhya Pradesh regarding the 1984 disaster at Carbide's Bhopal subsidiary. The company is charging the governments with "contributory" responsibility for the leak of poisonous gases, saying both governments knew of the toxicity of methyl isocyanate but failed to take adequate precautions to prevent a disaster. The government of India has sued Union Carbide for at least \$3 billion in compensation for the victims of the leak of methyl isocyanate.

--Peter Montague

=====

Descriptor terms: ozone; atmosphere; cfcs; federal; canada; switzerland; compacts; bans; regulation; global environmental problems; chemical production statistics; air pollution; lawsuits; liability; accidents; gas leaks; bhopal; union carbide; india; methyl isocyanate; tobacco; lung disease; disease statistics; lung cancer; second hand smoke; water pollution; drinking water; long island, ny; ny; suffolk county, ny; nassau county, ny; studies; aquifers; water supply; water shortages; development; epa; guidelines; air pollution; clean air act; emissions; limits; regulations; bubble; pollution rights; trading; banking; regulation;