

POLICY BRIEF

Following the Law to Protect Our Communities

Breaking Down Why Allegheny County's
Air Permit Update Better Protects Our
Health and Economy While Keeping the
Fees Fair





LET'S CLEAR THIS UP: FEES AREN'T FINES.

*Fees are like paying for your yearly car registration,
not court fines for breaking the law by recklessly driving*

Annual Air Maintenance Permit Fees	Pollution Fines
☒ Paid annually to hold a pollution permit	☐ Only issued when the company violates the law
☒ Required by Title 5 of the Clean Air Act to fully fund air quality programs by Allegheny County Health Department	☐ Intended to punish and deter future harm
☒ Companies producing pollution pay these routinely	☐ Only companies that break the law pay the fines

POLLUTION ISN'T FREE, FAMILIES AND LOCAL BUSINESSES ALREADY PAY THE PRICE

Every year, the production of steel in Southwestern PA are estimated to cause:

- **50-92** people dying prematurely
- **54** ER visits for respiratory reasons
- **24,949** people with asthma
- **3,988** missed days of work
- **6,965** missed days of school



Every single year, this leads to between **\$800 million to \$1.4 billion in health costs** and **shrinks our regional economy by \$16 million.**

A FEW BIG POLLUTERS ARE DOING MOST OF THE DAMAGE

Top 3 Largest Emitters in 2022

1 US Steel Edgar Thomson
4,053,185 tons of monitored air pollutants

2 Springdale Power Station
1,775,612 tons of monitored air pollutants

3 US Steel Clairton Coke Works
781,816 tons of monitored air pollutants



THE MAJOR POLLUTERS DRIVING THE POLLUTION ARE NOT SMALL BUSINESSES



1. Three facilities drive most of the air pollution in the region.
2. They are not small businesses. They are **multi-billion dollar corporations.**
3. They are some of the worst polluters in the state for multiple toxic emissions
4. Our friends and families pay the price with their lungs, health, and tax dollars

FLAT FEES LET BIG POLLUTERS OFF THE HOOK

	Current System	Proposed Update
Fee Rates	Flat \$8,000 fee for all major sources	Tiered fees based on actual pollution
Major Source Annual Pollution Fee	Pollution level doesn't matter, everyone pays the same	Bigger polluters pay more than smaller polluters
Funding Federally Required Programs	Funding gap delays inspections, permit approvals, and enforcement	Fully funds inspections, permits, and enforcement
Impact on Most Local Businesses	Most local businesses are unaffected	Most local businesses are unaffected

THE CLEAN AIR FEE UPDATE IS STUCK AND INDUSTRY OPPOSITION HAS HELPED DELAY PROGRESS

- 1 Allegheny County Health Department unanimously recommended updating its air permit fees
- 2 U.S. Steel is opposing the change, claiming it is unfair and too expensive
- 3 The proposal is stuck in County Council. We **need 10 votes** to pass.

Source: Public Source, Sept. 2024



PEOPLE ARE ASKING FAIR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FEE UPDATE

Where does
the money
go?

How bad is
our air
really?

Why is this an
issue now?

Who decides
what happens
now?

Will this hurt
jobs in the
Mon Valley?

Will these
fees actually
help?

Why is ACHD
raising fees
now?

Who has to
pay? And
how much?

We hear you. So, let's talk about it

POLLUTERS PAY FOR FEDERALLY REQUIRED FEES, NOT YOU.

1

OVERVIEW

Air Permit Fees Are:

1. Required by federal law with the 1990 Clean Air Act
2. Paid by large polluters, not taxpayers
3. Funds inspections, monitoring, permit reviews, and protecting impacted communities

2

HOW THEY WORK



Company pays a permit fee to Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) to pollute



ACHD uses funds for inspections, processing permits, enforcement, and funding clean air efforts



Air quality and community health improves

UPDATED PROPOSAL IS IF THEY PRODUCE MORE POLLUTION, THEN PAY MORE FEES

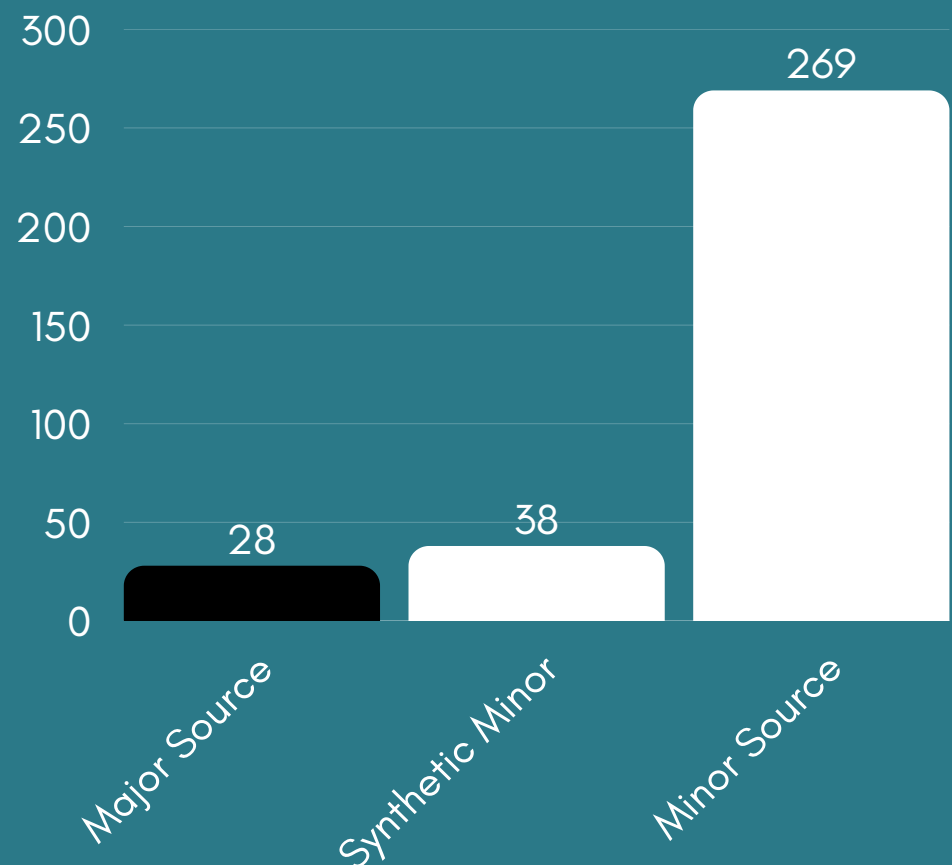
Biggest polluters pay more. Most will see much smaller changes.

<i>Category (Pollution Produced)</i>	<i>Ex. Companies</i>	<i>Current Maintenance Fee (By Day)</i>	<i>Proposed Maintenance Fee (By Day)</i>
Major Source (<i>High</i>)	Large steel mills, coke plants, etc.	\$21.90	\$41.07-\$150.58
Synthetic Minor (<i>High Potential, Low Output</i>)	Asphalt/Paving, metalworking, concrete	\$10.95	\$22.59
Minor Source (<i>Low</i>)	Dry cleaners, crematories, auto shops	\$5.47	\$11.63

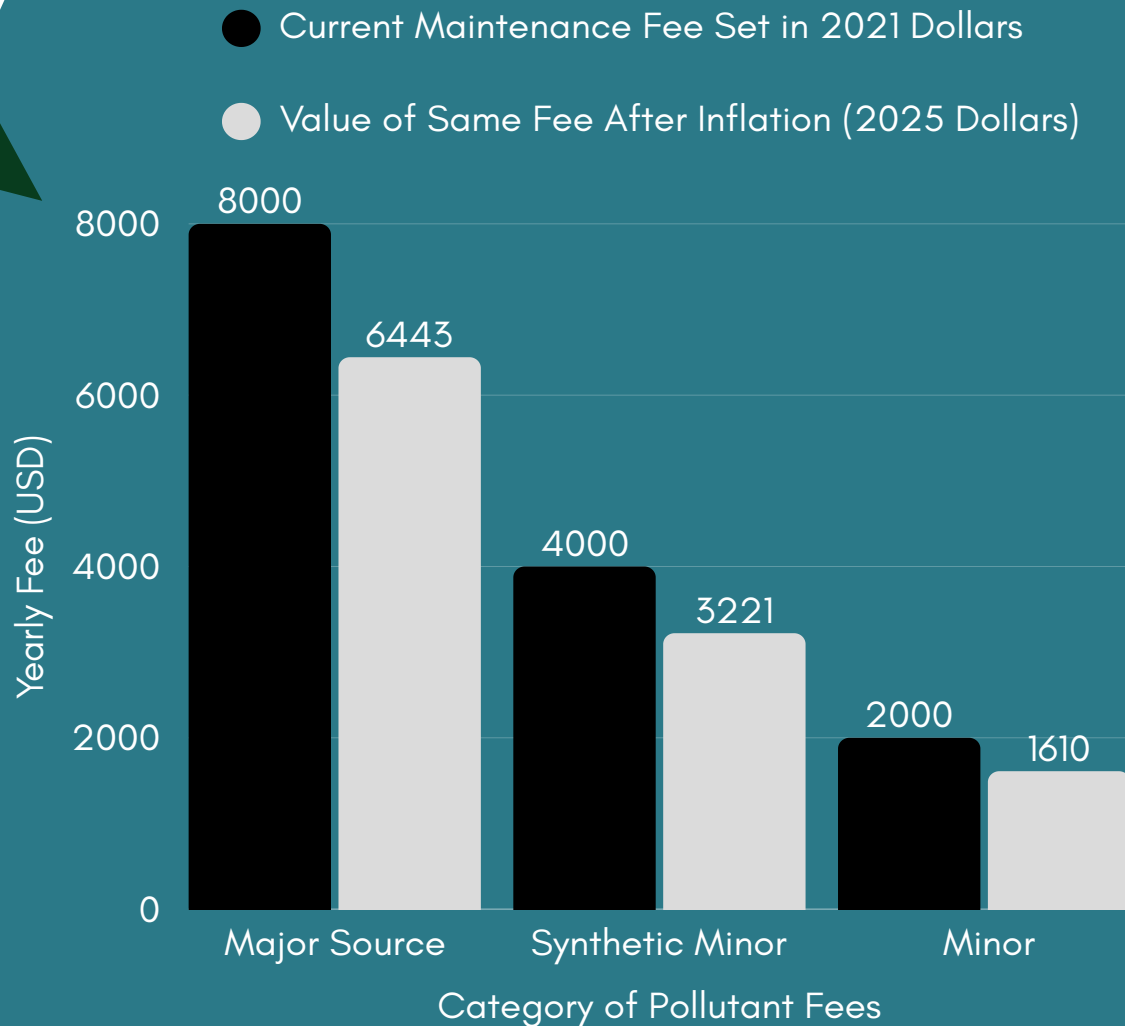
MOST SOURCES ARE SMALL AND WILL SEE MODEST CHANGES, BUT BIG POLLUTERS PAY THE MOST

- 91.6% of permit holders are minor sources of pollution
- Minor source fees are increasing but the daily cost is similar to parking in Pittsburgh
- Highest fees target top polluters like major industrial facilities, not small businesses

Permit Count By Type



AIR QUALITY PROGRAMS TOOK OVER A 20% CUT DUE TO INFLATION WITHOUT A SINGLE VOTE CAST

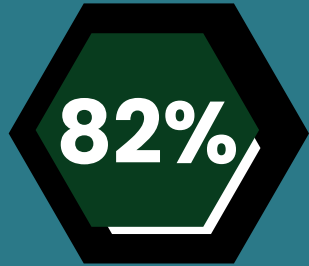


This means an \$8,000 fee from back then covers only \$6,443 worth of inspections, monitoring, and enforcement today.

In practical terms, Allegheny County Health Department has already taken over a **20% cut in clean air funding** without a single vote cast to do it.

Source: [US Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculation \(Jan. 2021- Sept. 2025\)](#),

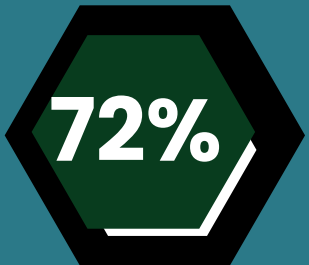
ALLEGHENY COUNTY RESIDENTS OVERWHELMINGLY BACK CLEAN AIR ACTION



AIR QUALITY IS A PROBLEM IN
THEIR COMMUNITY



GLOBAL WARMING WILL HURT
FUTURE GENERATIONS



CORPORATIONS SHOULD DO
MORE TO ADDRESS GLOBAL
WARMING

MOST OF THE POLLUTION COMES FROM A FEW MAJOR POLLUTERS

Source Type (<i>Pollution Amount</i>)	% of Permits	% of Total Emissions By Permit Type
Major/Title 5 (<i>High</i>)	7.7%	84.8%
Synthetic Minor (<i>Medium</i>)	11.6%	14.1%
Minor (<i>Low</i>)	80.8%	1.1%

The updated plan makes it fair. This is how it should be.

Source: [Allegheny County Health Department](#); [EPA. 2020 National Emissions Inventory](#)

UNDERFUNDED ENFORCEMENT ALLOWS A FEW TOXIC NEIGHBORS TO POLLUTE AND UNDERCUT THE MANY LAW ABIDING COMPANIES

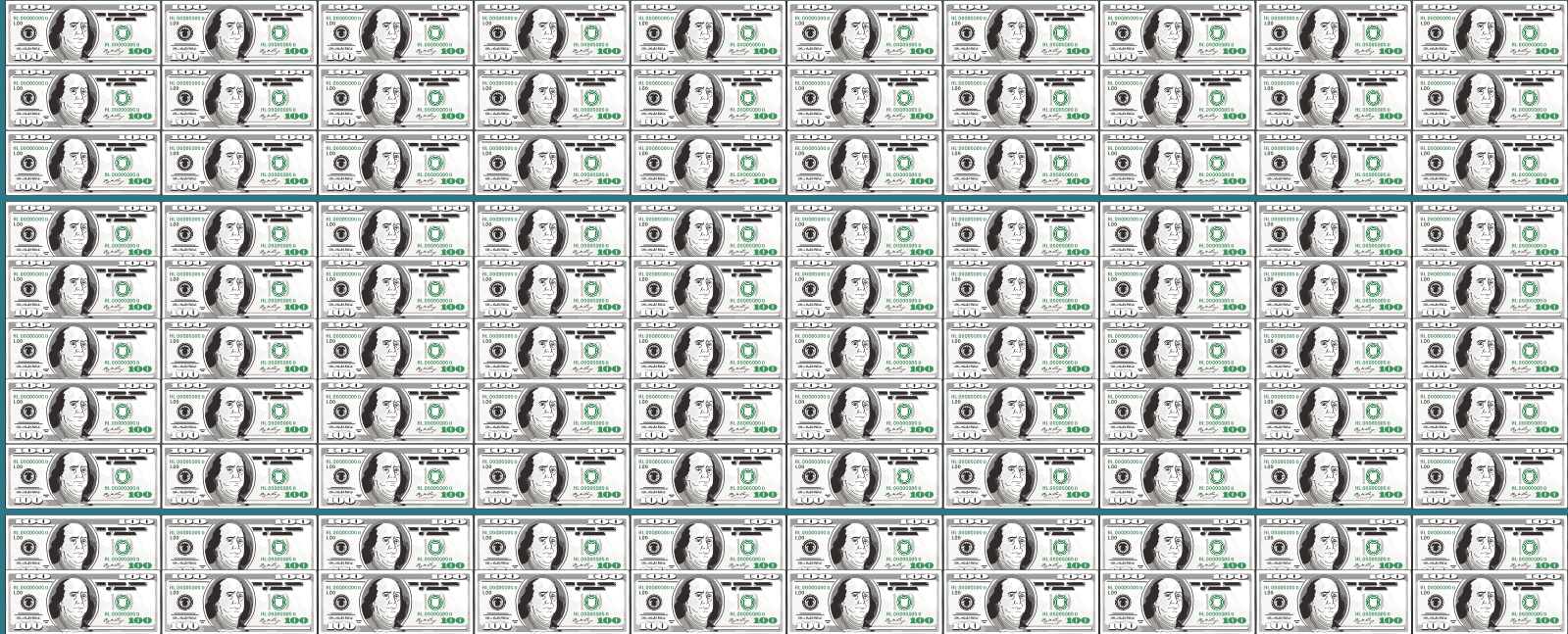
Clairton Coke Works Violated the Law by
Releasing Untreated Emissions **167 Times**
Last Year.

*The updated plan
makes it fair.
This is how it should be.*

Source: [Allegheny County Health Department](#);
[EPA. 2020 National Emissions Inventory](#).



US STEEL PAID ONLY 0.00106% OF THEIR TOTAL REVENUE TOWARDS FEES IN 2024



**Current Fee
Equivalent
(\$0.01)**

**US Steel Total Revenues in
2024 - \$15.6B**
(scaled down to \$10k)



**Proposed Fee
Equivalent
(\$0.11)**

This isn't a burden. It's barely a rounding error.

Source: [US Steel FY 2024 10-K SEC Filing](#)

COUNTY COUNCIL HAS NOT YET VOTED ON THE CLEAN AIR FEE UPDATE

It has been introduced, but not still has not passed.
If delayed again, the entire process could start over.

 **Find Your Council Member:**
bit.ly/findmycouncilrep

 **Learn More:** PennFuture.org

Your call or email can help build momentum to prevent further delays. These delays continue to cost families and local businesses while outdated fees let the largest polluters off the hook.