More than eight million Pennsylvanians live in areas with unsafe air due to dangerous levels of smog pollution. Inhaling smog is likened to getting a sunburn on your lungs that makes it harder to breathe. Smog triggers asthma attacks, heart attacks, and even premature death from heart and lung disease. When smog levels rise, air-quality alert days mean that children, seniors, and other vulnerable groups must stay inside or face serious risks to their health.1

Coal Plants are the Largest Source of Smog-Causing Pollution
Smog is caused when chemicals including nitrogen oxides (NOx) react in sunlight, forming ground-level ozone, also known as smog. Coal plants are the single largest source of smog-causing pollutants in Pennsylvania. While nearly all of the state’s largest coal plants have the technology to reduce nitrogen oxides, many don’t use it. This puts our air and health at risk.

Two-Thirds of Pennsylvanians are at Risk
Nearly two-thirds of Pennsylvanians live in areas classified as “non-attainment” meaning the air fails to meet the nation’s safe ozone standards. Many of these same areas have the state’s highest asthma hospitalization rates.

While smog is harmful to everyone, it’s especially dangerous for children, seniors, and those already suffering from respiratory or heart disease. There are more than 1.2 million seniors, 1.7 million children, and nearly 750,000 asthma sufferers in Pennsylvania whose health is put at risk from smog pollution.2 In addition, communities of color in Pennsylvania suffer from even higher rates of asthma and asthma-related hospitalizations.3

Governor Corbett’s Smog Plan Falls Short
States like Pennsylvania that fail to meet safe air standards are required by the Clean Air Act to develop plans to limit smog pollution. The easiest and cheapest way to quickly cut smog is to limit pollution from coal plants. Since most of the state’s largest coal plants already have the necessary technology to cut pollution, they simply need to be required to turn it on. Doing so would immediately reduce air emissions from these plants by 40%. Unfortunately, Governor Corbett’s proposed smog plan fails to set meaningful limits on coal plant emissions. This means coal plants could be allowed to continue belching...
smog-causing pollution while other, smaller industries are forced to clean up at a much higher cost.

In fact, Governor Corbett’s plan would allow the state’s coal plants to emit even more smog-causing pollution than they do right now. This could mean some plants are allowed to pollute up to four times more than they have in the past. It’s not fair for coal plants to get a free pass while our families suffer from unhealthy air.

GOVERNOR CORBETT’S PLAN WOULD ALLOW PA’S EIGHT LARGEST COAL PLANTS TO EMIT MORE

Governor Corbett’s proposed limit on NOx pollution

- ACHIEVABLE RATE OF EMISSIONS
- CURRENT RATE OF EMISSIONS

COMBINED TOTAL FOR PA’S EIGHT LARGEST COAL PLANTS

GOV ERNOR C ORBETT’S P LAN WOULD ALLOW PA’S EIGHT LARGEST COAL PLANTS TO EMIT MORE

A SMOG PLAN THAT WORKS

Our families deserve a smog plan that will clean up our air and hold polluters accountable. A strong smog plan should cut dangerous air pollution from coal plants and ensure coal plant operators meet the highest standards for healthy air.

In order to protect our families from dangerous and deadly pollution, the state’s smog plan should:

- Set stronger pollution limits for coal plants that will require them to use the life-saving technology most plants already have installed.
- Require each coal plant to be held accountable for reducing its pollution instead of allowing companies to group all of their plants together. Coal companies should not be allowed to pick and choose which plants to clean up. All communities deserve clean air.
- Ensure polluters aren’t allowed to emit high levels of smog-causing pollution on already bad air days. To avoid this, smog should be measured on a short-term basis in accordance with the Clean Air Act.

YOU CAN HELP CLEAN UP OUR AIR

- Send a comment to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, telling them you want a stronger smog plan that will limit pollution from coal plants
- Join the Sierra Club at a public hearing on the smog plan in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, or Norristown
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper demanding that Governor Corbett clean up our air by limiting smog-causing pollution from coal plants

Learn more and take action at sc.org/cutsomg

ENDNOTES

1 Environmental Protection Agency, Smog-Who Does it Hurt? What You Need to Know About Ozone and Your Health: http://www.epa.gov/airnow/health/smog.pdf
2 American Lung Association State of the Air 2013: http://www.stateoftheair.org/2013/states/pennsylvania/