



NEW REPORT:

Clean Energy Technology Can Protect Health of New Hampshire

Clean energy to help reverse high state asthma rate, mercury contamination, nuclear hazards

CONCORD, N.H. – The health of New Hampshire residents is threatened by the state’s dependence on polluting fossil fuel energy and dangerous nuclear energy, according to a new report by Physicians for Social Responsibility, a non-profit public health organization. The report, entitled *A Breath of Fresh Air: How Smarter Energy Choices Can Protect Public Health in New Hampshire*, finds that by relying on out-dated energy sources for almost 80% of total electricity needs, New Hampshire increases public health risks, including spiking asthma rates and increased mercury exposure. Fortunately New Hampshire’s leadership in progressive state-level policies and the state’s abundant natural resources have made it well positioned to begin reversing this trend by shifting to affordable, clean renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and biomass.

“Dirty power in New Hampshire has led to asthma rates higher than the rest of the nation,” said Kent Bransford, M.D., Medical Consultant for Physicians for Social Responsibility. “To reverse this harmful trend, new investments in clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency programs are needed to clear the air and improve public health. This report demonstrates strong public health protections must be priority in a 21st Century energy policy. It’s not too late to make a change, to stop thousands of asthma attacks and build a healthy future for our kids.”

New Hampshire obtains 50 percent of its electricity needs from dangerous nuclear energy and nearly 30 percent from coal—the dirtiest fossil fuel. These energy choices have had their effect on the state. In Merrimack County over 34,000 tons of smog and acid rain-causing air pollutants are emitted annually from the local power plant and Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties are labeled with the worst air in the state. In addition to high asthma rates, New Hampshire residents must also worry about the mercury level in their waterways. May Pond, in Pillsbury State Park in Washington County, Horseshoe Pond in Merrimack County, and two reservoirs in the Fifteen Mile Falls chain of the Connecticut River are among the most contaminated of the state’s water bodies.

“As a physician, I call on my fellow health care providers to make public health and environmental issues a top priority,” said Dr. Bransford. With an asthma rate 1.8 percent higher than the rest of the nation, it is essential for New Hampshire, as well as our nation, to adopt a healthier and more sustainable energy policy, in which renewable energy, conservation and efficiency complement a phased transition away from pollution-intensive fossil fuel and dangerous nuclear energy.”

Fortunately, New Hampshire has the natural, human, and economic resources for a cleaner and more efficient energy system that protects public health. New Hampshire has already taken the lead to decrease local carbon dioxide emissions, but needs to increase its renewable energy leadership by enacting a strong Renewable Portfolio Standard. Combined with energy efficiency and conservation measures, wind, solar, and biomass energy sources in New Hampshire could create 2,800 new jobs by 2010 and 5,000 by 2020 in the state, according to the Tellus Institute. New Hampshire’s wind potential