

Contact: Jack Saporito, 847-506-0670
Ross Ruthenberg < rosser@megsinet.net >
Date: EMBARGOED UNTIL April 13, 2004 (9:30 AM Eastern)
- For Immediate Release –
Ethnic, Jews Harmed by Airport Pollution?

Chicago—Triggered by a recent studyⁱ showing extraordinary high incidences of cancer found in dozens of communities downwind of Chicago's O'Hare airport, a new studyⁱⁱ, "*Jewish Genetic Sensitivity To Pollution Accentuated Disease*" presents evidence that genetic differences between Jewish and the general populations can result in disease sensitivity to pollution sources and particularly to major nearby sources, such as Chicago's O'Hare airport-aircraft toxic air pollution emissions.

Besides the health implications, this is especially costly to the general public, communities, public health agencies, taxpayers, etc. It has been estimated that the cancers caused by O'Hare airport and its aircraft cost the public approximately \$8 billion annually. The victims, not the Chicago airport, endure this considerable cost.

It is known that the human body has developed defense mechanisms against disease over eons of evolution. It is also quite understandable that variations exist between individuals (as functions of one's general health, parentage, etc.). But what is becoming increasingly known, with the explosion in genetic knowledge, is that an entire sub-population can be more susceptible to pollution-caused disease than others, due to genetic differences to the general population.

The impact of this study's conclusion is that it is probable that higher levels of pollution-induced or related disease could be experienced in communities with high percentages of Jewish population (and possibly other genetic populations) to the extent they are being placed in harm's way by major pollutersⁱⁱⁱ.

Jack Saporito, spokesperson for the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare states, "AReCO is concerned that the Jewish populations living in the dozens of communities affected by pollution from O'Hare and its aircraft overflights, as well as at airports nationwide, could be in serious jeopardy. They are at risk of bearing a significant portion of the serious burden. This is of significant concern, since there are a reported 2,000-3,000 U.S. airports undergoing significant expansion; also, most of the general aviation airports will now be handling jet operations. This massive expansion is driven by the air industry's chief promoter, the Federal Aviation Administration, and others, who are forecasting an extraordinary massive growth of future flights."

"AReCO wants to alert and inform the Jewish population and other groups of the legal Environmental Justice issues that may apply to such populations, to the extent that they and their children are being placed in harms way by these expanding major polluters."

These Environmental Justice law protections stipulate that no individual group of the population should bear a disproportionate share of negative consequences from polluting operations such as O'Hare airport.^{iv} [Indeed, within these Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) definitions, "children" might be considered as such a group, as might "pregnant women", asthmatics, immune compromised individuals, hospitals, etc.]

The new study warns that Jewish populations should be advised to consider themselves as being one of the potential "environmentally sensitive" groups and to consider extra protection measures when

the EPA issues dangerous air quality warnings e.g. “ozone alerts”, high levels of particulate matter, etc.

AReCO has communicated these results and concerns to the Environmental Justice Council, requesting that they incorporate this issue into their scientific work and deliberations in order to better define Jewish group pollution sensitivities and provide improved guidance on needs for protections from significant pollution sources, such as airports/aircraft operations.

For more information: AReCO can be contacted at: www.areco.org (or by phoning: 630-415-3370).

- 30 -

ⁱ Ruthenberg, R. E. "Investigation Of The Cancer Incidence Rates In The Vicinity Of O'Hare Airport," Mar. 21, 2002. <http://www.areco.org/oharecancer.htm>

ⁱⁱ Ruthenberg, R. E. "Jewish Genetic Sensitivity To Pollution Accentuated Disease," Apr 1, 2004. [www.areco.org]

ⁱⁱⁱ The issue becomes more complicated in that many major polluters, such as airports and their aircraft operations, are not openly identified to the public. Thus, populations in the area/region may not be aware of the degree of nearby pollution danger, especially considering that most dangerous pollutants are not sensory detectable (odor, visibility, etc.) at or near their dangerous concentration levels.

^{iv} “Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.”

[EPA, www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/index.html]