

Report blames petroleum industry for 25% of toxic pollutants

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The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) -- created by Canada, the United States and Mexico -- said 90 percent of toxic pollutants came from just over a dozen industries.

Aside from oil and gas extraction, mining, wastewater treatment, electric utilities and chemical manufacturing are named as the principle offenders.

"Ninety percent of the 5.5 billion kilograms of toxic pollutant releases and transfers reported in North America in 2005 can be traced to just 30 substances from 15 industrial sectors across the United States, Canada and Mexico," it said.

The US petroleum industry reported 1.5 billion kilograms "of toxic pollutants reported by all sectors in 2005" the CEC said.

"Analysis of 2002-2005 reporting by Canadian and US petroleum refineries and bulk storage terminals discloses that, on average, about seven million kilograms of carcinogens and developmental or reproductive toxicants were released annually.

"Most of these pollutants were released to air and water."

Adrian Vazquez-Galvez, the body's executive director said the report "presents the clearest view ever of industrial pollution in North America."

But, he admitted, the picture was incomplete, with difference in reporting standards across industries and the three countries involved.

"(The report) reveals some major blind spots," Vazquez-Galvez said.

"This information is critical to government, industry, and communities, and highlights issues of comparability and areas for further action on pollution reduction to address potential environmental and human health issues," he said.

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