

W.Va. spill exposes a new risk to water from coal

January 18 2014, by Dina Cappiello



In this Jan. 13, 2014, photo, workers, left, inspect an area outside a retaining wall around storage tanks where a chemical leaked into the Elk River at Freedom Industries storage facility in Charleston, W.Va. The chemical spill that contaminated water for hundreds of thousands of West Virginians is just the latest and most high-profile case of coal polluting the nation's waters. An Associated Press analysis of federal environmental data found chemicals and waste from the coal industry have tainted hundreds of waterways and groundwater supplies for decades, spoiling private wells, shutting down fishing and rendering streams virtually lifeless. (AP Photo/Steve Helber)

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Because these contaminants are released gradually and in some cases not tracked or regulated, they attract much less attention than a massive spill like the one in West Virginia.

The Environmental Protection Agency says discharges from coal-fired power plants are responsible for almost 60 percent of all toxic pollution entering the nation's waters.

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