

# Stop Coal Trains in Oakland

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your interest in signing on to our letter calling on Oakland policy makers to keep coal out of Oakland! We are gathering signatures until Friday, February 25th when we will submit the sign-on letter. Please forward the email announcing this signature gathering to any colleagues who you think might be interested in supporting this effort.

Please click on "Next" below to see the letter and sign your name.

Thank you!

Bob Gould, MD

President, SF Bay Area PSR

Dear Mayor Libby Schaaf and Members of the Oakland City Council,

We are physicians, nurses, health care providers and public health professionals serving people of Oakland, neighboring parts of the East Bay, and the entire San Francisco Bay Area region . We are writing to oppose the current proposal to export coal through Oakland.

We are particularly concerned that any coal export through Oakland will likely increase major health risks to our already vulnerable population by increasing exposure to: hazardous fine particulate matter, toxic chemicals and/or metals, possible explosions, and the burgeoning hazards of climate change. We also are concerned about the expected associated increase in health care costs and burdens on local health infrastructure stemming from these operations and related population exposures. With an estimated 9 million tons of coal proposed for export through Oakland annually, these potential health threats and costs may be significant.

The release of coal dust, inevitable in the handling of coal, increases the dangers of air pollution by increasing exposure to particulate matter. Coal dust consists of very tiny particles, often smaller than 10 microns, including very fine particles less than 2.5 microns (PM2.5). Exposure to such particles has been implicated in the development of lung damage, asthma, heart disease, cancer, adverse birth outcomes, and associated with premature death along with increases in hospitalization and emergency department visits. Research indicates that there is no safe level of exposure to PM2.5 and so there is no coal shipment scenario that will not significantly impact public health.

Coal dust, including PM2.5, also carries with it toxic heavy metals including mercury, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead and nickel. These substances have been long-associated with the development of cancer, birth and genetic defects, endocrine disruption, and neurological damage. Given our proximity to the San Francisco Bay, these toxics can enter our local waters and ultimately our food supply. In addition, with roughly 30% of the Bay Area's air pollution currently coming from Asia, our communities may be exposed to these toxic substances twice – on the way out through coal dust and then back again by way of post-combustion air pollution.

Oakland's children, elderly, and chronically ill are most at risk. The communities surrounding the port and labor force will also be at great risk, increasing the already unacceptably high burden of health disparities of these exposed populations. As coal dust is known to travel great distances, the health of all of Oakland and neighboring municipalities can be potentially endangered as well.

The unproven mitigation strategies in the proposal before the City Council cannot assure adequate protection from PM2.5, toxic substances, or even explosions. The latter hazard, in a populous urban setting, could produce a potentially tremendous mass-casualty emergency.

Finally, the volume of coal anticipated to ship from Oakland is significant enough as to ultimately measurably contribute to climate change and all of its well-understood environmental and public health sequelae. A local decision to place a coal terminal in Oakland will have a truly deleterious impact on global health – for the worse.

In summary, as health professionals who care deeply about the health of our patients, our communities and our planet, we urge you to protect public health and strongly oppose the proposed coal-export plan for Oakland.