

# Health

## Shipping news: cleaner air for U.S. ports

The 8,000 ships that call on Houston annually bring the city prosperity, but also air pollution. San Jacinto Elementary, located two miles from the Houston Ship Channel, ranked fifth out of 127,809 schools for bad air, based on data from EPA's Toxic Release Inventory.

"We just accept it," said Nikki Barlow, the mother of a second grader. "It's what this whole area is known for." Houston, of course, is not alone. Oceangoing vessels dock at more than 100 U.S. ports in cities like Seattle, Savannah and Los Angeles. Forty of these ports are in major metropolitan areas that fail to meet federal air quality standards.

Oceangoing ships burn low-grade residual fuel, the tar-like sludge left at the end of the refining process. Soon, these ships will be a lot cleaner. We led an effort this year, working closely with EPA, to win preliminary approval for an emission control area extending out 230 miles from the U.S. coast. Once approved by the International Maritime Organization, this will cut ship pollution 90% by 2015—and save 14,000 lives annually.

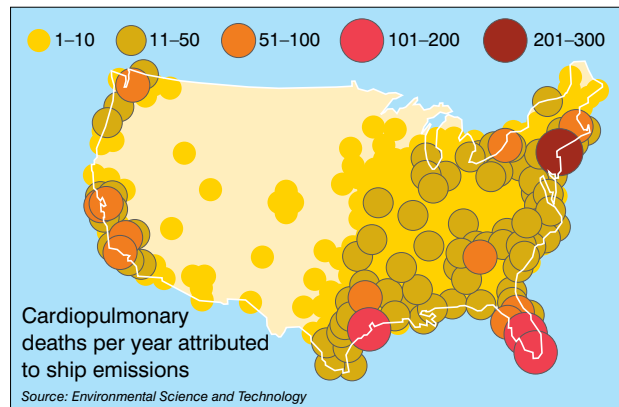
A decade ago, EDF set out to tackle under-regulated sources of air pollution. Oceangoing vessels, including cruise ships, were among the worst offenders, emitting huge amounts of diesel particulates that lodge in people's lungs. "Ships are floating smokestacks that deliver soot and smog straight to the heart of our most crowded coastal cities," says our air specialist Dr. Elena Craft.

EDF played a key role in getting stricter international emissions standards adopted last year. We helped pass federal legislation allowing the United States to join the international treaty requiring the cleanup. Since nine out of ten vessels that call on U.S. ports are foreign-flagged, the international rules are crucial.

We also work directly in port communities. In Houston, for example, we helped launch a \$9 million clean-truck program to retrofit short-haul rigs, which account for a third of that port's emissions.

"No child should have to breathe fouled air," says Craft. "Cleaning up pollution hotspots around our nation's ports is one of the most important things we can do to protect public health."

## The hidden cost of ship pollution



*Even far from ports, air pollution from ships adds to the death toll from heart attacks and other causes.*

**87** million Americans are affected by pollution from oceangoing ships



“Oceangoing ships are a major source of air pollution that spreads hundreds of miles inland. We’re proud to work with EDF to advocate for pollution cleanup that will save thousands of lives.”

CHARLES D. CONNOR (CAPT. USN RET.)  
AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT AND CEO



“Air pollution exacts a heavy toll on public health, particularly for children and older Americans. Our goal is to cut smokestack pollution by 70%.”

VICKIE PATTON  
EDF DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

### America’s dirtiest power plants will cut pollution

In a major victory for clean air, a federal court reinstated an EPA program to cut nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide emissions from Eastern power plants by more than 50%, saving thousands of lives annually. The decision, which also requires EPA to strengthen its program, came as a result of our petition to overturn an earlier ruling that would have terminated the program.



### Protecting consumers from unsafe chemicals

The U.S. imports formaldehyde-laden plywood from China, some of which sickened people housed in FEMA trailers after Hurricane Katrina. That same plywood could not be sold in Europe, or even for domestic use in China.

EDF biochemist Dr. Richard Denison told this story at a Congressional hearing on reforming the nation’s 33-year-old chemicals law, considered among the weakest of U.S. environmental laws.

EDF has been pressing for reform since 1997, when we published Toxic Ignorance, a seminal report that exposed the lack of health data for common chemicals found in everything from baby bottles to pet food.

Troubled by the low priority EPA has given to chemical safety, Denison upped the pressure, not by publishing another report but by critiquing EPA’s program on his EDF blog. Shortly thereafter, the agency announced new principles for chemical assessment that closely mirror our recommendations.



### LEVERAGING AN OPPORTUNITY

#### Reforming America’s chemical safety law

After EDF demonstrated how the U.S. chemical safety law fails to protect health, even the American Chemistry Council now supports reform.

**Leverage point:** More protective laws in Europe and several U.S. states are forcing companies to ensure the safety of their chemicals. This has created a unique opportunity to fix the inadequate federal law.

**Allies:** Members of Congress, American Nurses Association, United Steelworkers and other health and labor organizations

**A donor’s perspective:** “EDF used its technical expertise to expose critical flaws in America’s chemicals policy. They’re now leading the way toward developing solutions for real reform.”

SARAH VOGEL  
THE JOHNSON FAMILY FOUNDATION

[▶ BLOG: Follow the story at \[edf.org/chemreform\]\(http://edf.org/chemreform\)](#)