FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 14 deaths linked to the November 1975 air pollution episode points to at least 3 immediate conclusions:
1) The Bureau of Air Pollution Control must produce an Episode Master Plan.
2) Mortality Models must be used as a daily policy tool.
3) Local, State, and Federal Agencies must restructure and tighten the levels at which alerts are called.

Based on EPA's March 1976 report "The Allegheny County Air Pollution Episode, November 16, 1975 - November 20, 1975, prepared by Michael G. McGee, Air and Energy Analysis Section, GASP is urgently requesting an Episode Master Plan from Allegheny County Air Pollution Control Bureau within 30 days. GASP is also asking the County Commissioners to immediately establish a Task Force to evaluate the Air Pollution Control Bureau. The Task Force Committee's duties should be an evaluation of the current Air Pollution Emergency Episode system and recommendation of changes (including tightening the levels at which alerts are called).

The Air Pollution Control Bureau is specifically required by Allegheny County Law, Article XVIII, Section 1513 to prepare an Episode Master Plan describing all procedures and plans to be followed by the department, individual sources, and the public at each stage, based on individual plans submitted and signed by each source and approved by the Bureau. Four years later no Master Plan exists in writing. A curtailment plan agreed to and signed by U.S. Steel does not exist.
According to the not yet released EPA Report, the Air Pollution Bureau was not prepared to respond to an emergency of this severity because U.S. Steel does not have adequate plans on file. As Mr. Snyder, EPA Region III, stated Friday, they [Air Pollution Bureau] shouldn’t have been negotiating about what to do in the middle of an emergency with air worsening. The Bureau won’t even make U.S. Steel adhere to the same type of plan submitted and agreed to by Jones & Laughlin.

Article XVIII of the Allegheny County Air Pollution Law says that

"An Emergency Stage declaration shall be terminated by the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners or his designated representative when Emergency Stage values are no longer exceeded and when an official meteorological forecast is received that for the next 24-hour period conditions conducive to the good dispersion of air contaminants will exist."

GASP is aware that allegedly Mr. Chleboski illegally terminated the episode because he did not have the required forecast, and still allowed U.S. Steel to decrease the coking time from 48 hours to 42 hours which permitted U.S. Steel to increase production - surrendering to U.S. Steel pressure. Later, Mr. Chleboski was actually going to terminate the entire episode himself (it is our understanding Mr. Chleboski was not a designated representative) without yet having the official weather forecast. GASP is appalled by the county’s lack of awareness about their own laws.

U.S. Steel is the major source of air pollution in the Mon Valley, yet they have not cut back plans on file. The Bureau’s role is not to beg and plead for cut backs during an emergency but rather to implement specific curtailment plans agreed to by the source.

U.S. Steel’s recalcitrance and the Bureau’s inadequacy must not be permitted to persist to the next emergency in Allegheny County. All sources must submit signed curtailment plans, and sources which do not comply must be prosecuted.
The Allegheny County Air Pollution Control Bureau is also required to issue a report on any air episode which goes over the 2nd stage alert. Five months later, no final report exists because the Bureau says it still needs data from U.S. Steel. The only written report on the November episode is in the Clean Air Monitor, Winter 1976, Vol. 76, No. 1:

"The first air pollution emergency in Allegheny County since countywide monitoring began in 1970 occurred last November in the heavily industrialized Monongahela Valley. Swift action by the Bureau in ordering industrial cutbacks and a change in meteorology brought the emergency to an end within 24 hours."

Even after the Bureau was aware of the EPA mortality study they continued to make self serving comments when they should be using the study as a positive tool for continuously alerting the public to the dangers of air pollution. Mortality models must be used as a daily policy tool because they enable pollution control authorities to forecast the probable effect of a specific control action and later assess the effectiveness of that control.

Assuming the EPA Report is correct, the 1975 Emergency Episode and resulting deaths demand a thorough immediate investigation. The County must exert the necessary leadership to bring U.S. Steel and other pollution sources into compliance. The purpose of Air Pollution Control is the protection of the public's health.

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