

You are currently viewing the printable version of this article, to return to the normal page, please [click here](#).

MILLOY: EPA's statistics not science, but nonsense

Next to China's, agency's air quality numbers don't add up

By Steve Milloy - *The Washington Times* - Thursday, January 5, 2012

The Chinese city of Xi'an has some of the worst air quality in the world. Yet its air is significantly safer than the air in U.S. cities, according to a new study.

If you have trouble believing that, then you ought to have trouble believing Obama Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claims that U.S. ambient air quality is killing tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people per year.

Chinese researchers compared data on air pollution and death rates in Xi'an from 2004 to 2008. In 2006, the World Health Organization ranked Xi'an as having the second-worst air pollution in Asia, which means the second worst in the world. The Chinese just published their findings in the U.S. government journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Using the same sort of data and statistical analysis employed by EPA-funded air quality researchers, the Chinese researchers reported having statistically correlated every 10 microgram-per-cubic-meter's worth of fine particulate matter (soot) in Xi'an's air with a 0.2 percent increase in the city's death rate.

While that sounds like a result in the statistically insignificant range - and it is - we're going to overlook that normally fatal flaw and, instead, momentarily embrace the result so that we can compare it with what EPA-funded researchers claim about U.S. cities.

In a 2009 study of 112 U.S. cities, EPA-funded researchers reported that every 10 microgram-per-cubic-meter's worth of fine particulate matter correlated with about a 1.0 percent increase in death rate. Once again this is, in reality, statistical noise. But in the fantasy world of EPA air quality science it is five times greater than what Chinese researchers reported from the second dirtiest-city in the world.

But there's more. Just how dirty is the air in Xi'an?

As measured by the Chinese researchers, the air in Xi'an is, on average, 9 to 10 times more polluted in terms of fine particulate matter than the two most polluted cities in the 112-city study.

That dirty Chinese air, according to EPA scientific practice, is safer than U.S. air by a factor of five. This is shocking. If air pollution really were deadly, one would expect to see this phenomena operating in high gear in the respiratory horror story that Xi'an should be.

Leaving the fantasy land of EPA air quality science and returning to the real world, clean U.S. air is axiomatically not more dangerous than filthy Chinese air and so some sort of explanation of these results is required.

The scientific and medical reality is that ambient air pollution - even as grimy, stinky, eye-watering and ugly as it is in China - does not kill or hasten death. Fine particulate matter was such a public health problem, in fact, that no one knew about it until EPA-funded researchers invented it in 1993 - 30 years after the Clean Air Act was enacted.

Since the Clinton administration, the agency has been using its invention to impose billions and billions of dollars of costs on our economy in return for the entirely imaginary benefit of tens of thousands of lives saved annually.

All this is of much more than mere academic interest given that it is this very sort of EPA junk science that underlies two new agency rules from 2011: July's Cross State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR) and December's Mercury and Air Toxics Standard (MATS) rule. Both rules aim to reduce emissions from the coal-fired power plants that provide about 45 percent of the nation's electricity.

The EPA alleges that the rules' reductions in ambient airborne fine particulate matter will save tens of thousands of lives annually and, as EPA values lives at about \$8 million each, the agency further claims that the rules will provide hundreds of billions of dollars in "health benefits."

But as the Chinese study shows, the EPA's scientific claims and, by extension, its benefits claims about fine particulate matter ought to be very much open to question.

Against these phantom benefits are the very real costs of the CSAPR and MATS rules, amounting to tens of billions of dollars in utility compliance costs, lost jobs and higher energy prices. There's also the prospect that coal plant shutdowns will reduce electricity

reliability and lead to brownouts during heat waves.

Directly challenging the EPA on its fine particulate matter claims has been difficult as the agency has secured the key data in the hands of private university academics, who are out of congressional and Freedom of Information Act reach. The EPA is currently stonewalling an effort by Rep. Andy Harris, Maryland Republican, of the House Science Committee, to obtain the data in question.

The only good news in all this so far is that on Dec. 30, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit took the unusual step of staying the CSAPR rule pending its appeal. With any luck, a similar fate will befall MATS and a new, non-Obama EPA would then get to reconsider the rules in 2013.

Meanwhile, the Chinese data ought to embolden the 112th Congress' unprecedented efforts to rein in the out-of-control EPA and its junk science.

Steve Milloy publishes JunkScience.com and is the author of "Green Hell: How Environmentalists Plan to Control Your Life and What You Can Do to Stop Them" (Regnery, 2009).

© Copyright 2015 The Washington Times, LLC. [Click here for reprint permission.](#)