

## **EPA to Cut Emissions from Sewage Sludge Incinerators**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to cut emissions of mercury and eight other pollutants from sewage sludge incinerators. Sewage sludge incinerators are typically located at wastewater treatment facilities and are the sixth largest emitters of mercury in the U.S. The proposed standards would apply to approximately 232 individual multiple hearth and fluidized bed incineration units located at 126 facilities in 26 states and Puerto Rico. EPA estimates that this proposal will cut mercury emissions from these units by more than 75 percent. Units incinerating sewage sludge at other types of facilities such as commercial and industrial incinerators will be covered under different air pollution standards.

Mercury released into the air eventually deposits into water, where it is converted into methylmercury, a highly toxic form of mercury that builds up in fish. In addition to inhalation, people are exposed to mercury by consuming contaminated fish. EPA estimates that this regulatory proposal would yield health benefits ranging from \$130 million to \$320 million in 2015, with annualized costs estimated at approximately \$105 million for all currently operating incineration units to comply with the proposed standards.

EPA will take comment on the proposed rule for 30 days after it is officially published in the Federal Register. The rule is expected to be finalized in 2011 and become effective in 2015.