

# New York State Department of Health

## Appendix G Response letter to Senator Clinton's office

2008154.37784



Flanigan Square 547 River Street Troy, New York 12180-2216

Richard F. Daines, M.D.  
Commissioner

Wendy E. Saunders  
Chief of Staff

June 17, 2008

Hon. Hillary Rodham Clinton  
United States Senator  
SR-464 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Clinton:

I am writing in response to a question posed by Mr. Dan Utech of your staff following the release by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) of the public comment draft report entitled, "Respiratory Hospitalizations in Areas Surrounding the AES Greenidge Power Plant, Town of Torrey, Yates County, New York" in January, 2008. The report summarized our analysis of respiratory hospitalizations in the area most affected by emissions from the AES Greenidge power plant. The analysis was conducted following your request to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) for a study of respiratory health in the communities surrounding the AES Greenidge power station in Torrey, New York, due to concerns about respiratory illness in the area. This was prompted by an informal statistical summary prepared by David Carpenter, M.D., Director of the University at Albany's Institute for Health and the Environment, and published in a local newspaper. It found statistically significant elevations of several respiratory diseases in six ZIP codes near the facility.

In the NYSDOH draft report we identified the areas near the AES Greenidge facility most likely to be affected by its emissions using local meteorology data and an air dispersion model to identify the ZIP codes that would be impacted by the AES Greenidge emissions. We then compared respiratory hospitalization rates in those areas to rates in similar areas of upstate New York. In general, the report showed that respiratory hospitalization rates were lower in this area of central New York than in other areas upstate. In terms of evaluating health effects that may be related to a particular exposure or hazard, this approach makes sense. However, there remained concerns that hospitalization rates in the original six ZIP Code area analyzed by Dr. Carpenter were not evaluated in the NYSDOH report, even though our model did not indicate that this area was likely the most impacted by power plant emissions. While we did not receive any formal public comments on the report, this issue was raised by Mr. Utech as well as by the local media.

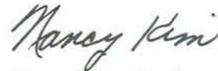
To address this, NYSDOH evaluated respiratory hospitalization rates in the 6 ZIP Code area first evaluated by Dr. Carpenter using the same methodology described in the NYSDOH report. Throughout the analysis NYSDOH conferred with ATSDR on methodological issues and findings. We found rates of chronic bronchitis and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) and rates of acute respiratory infections in this 6 ZIP Code area to be similar to those of other parts of upstate New York between

## *New York State Department of Health*

1993 and 2000. These are the same outcomes and years that Dr. Carpenter originally evaluated. Several subtle, methodological differences between the two analyses may explain why we did not see the 30-40% increases in respiratory hospitalizations noted by Dr. Carpenter. A more detailed description of the results is attached. These tables will also be included in the final version of the report.

Finally, although we did not generally find elevated rates of respiratory hospitalizations in the area, we have no way of knowing if respiratory hospitalization rates would have been even lower if there were no emissions from the power plant. In addition, more subtle adverse respiratory effects may have occurred in the population. Studies of other coal burning power plants have shown emissions to be associated with decreased respiratory health and any reductions in emissions from power plants should benefit the public's health. The installation of state-of-the-art pollution control devices in response to the landmark agreement between AES and the State of New York in 2005 has substantially reduced emissions from this facility. The NYSDOH will continue to be vigilant in addressing health concerns for respiratory illness that may be related to power plant emissions. If you have further questions on this study, please have your staff contact me at 518-402-7550 or Steven Forand in the NYSDOH Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology at 1-800-458-1158, extension 2-7950.

Sincerely,



Nancy Kim, Ph.D.  
Interim Director  
Center for Environmental Health

Attachment

cc: D. Utech  
E. Bederman  
H. Frumkin, M.D., Dr.P.H.  
R. Weston  
G. Ulirsch, Ph.D.  
A. Block  
S. Hwang, Ph.D.  
E. Horn, Ph.D.  
A. Grey, Ph.D.  
D. Miles  
S. Forand  
T. Gentile