

Local Health Professionals Urge Protections for Air and Climate

Dear Tacoma City Council,

We are health professionals who live and/or work in Tacoma. **We ask that you renew the pause on new fossil fuel infrastructure on Tacoma's Tideflats - and strengthen the moratorium by limiting expansion of existing facilities - for the sake our community's health.**

The interim regulations passed last year are vital protections for keeping our communities safe from new or expanded fossil fuel infrastructure.¹ They must be renewed now and throughout the duration of the Subarea planning process while a long-term economic vision for our community is crafted.

Fossil fuel projects represent significant threats to human health. Studies show that proximity to fossil fuel infrastructure is linked to increased air pollution that exacerbates asthma, threatens cardiovascular health, and contributes to neurodevelopmental damage.^{2,3,4} Pollutants emitted from processing and refining of oil and gas products include toxic air contaminants and carcinogens. These include particulate matter, which can lodge deep into lungs and contribute to asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and volatile organic compounds that disproportionately harm children and infants.⁵ Closing fossil fuel plants has also been shown to reduce preterm births.⁶ A report from the National Medical Association and NAACP last year revealed that people of color are more likely to reside near oil and gas plants, and that the proximity is correlated with higher exposure to air toxics, cancer risk, and respiratory ailments.⁷ The proximity of the Puyallup Tribe and their historic treaty rights, in addition to the hundreds of immigrants detained at the Northwest Detention Center within view of the Tideflats, make these protections even more urgent.

Tacoma is already home to major fossil fuel facilities, including US Oil and Targa Sound Terminal. **Pierce County residents and communities of color in particular already suffer higher rates of heart disease, and diabetes than the Washington State average.**⁸ Two hospitals are within three miles to these industries.

As healthcare professionals we are particularly concerned about the expansion of existing fossil fuel facilities in Tacoma. **We encourage you to strengthen the regulations by limiting the ability of existing fossil fuel facilities to expand.** Thank you for protecting our community's health.

¹ City of Tacoma, [Amended Resolution No. 39723](#)

² The Healthcare Burden of Fossil Fuels, [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/graphic-science-health-care-burden-of-fossil-fuels/>

³ Position Paper on Crude Oil Transport and Storage, [Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility](#), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxmHEo6N5zkRMG5PMk5DTjVybUk/view>

⁴ "Neurodegenerative and neurological disorders by small inhaled particles" *Neurotoxicology*, Volume 59, 2016, pp. 94-106. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0161813X16301346?via%3Dihub>

⁵ "Potential hazards of air pollutant emissions from unconventional oil and natural gas operations on the respiratory health of children and infants."

⁶ "Study: Closing fossil fuel plants reduced preterm births." *Yale Climate Connections*, 2018. <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/08/closing-fossil-fuel-plants-reduces-preterm-births/>

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⁸ ["Pierce County Chronic Disease and Risk Factor Profile," Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#), 2017.

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Questions?

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