FACT SHEET: Prairie State Coal Plant Clean Air Act Permit

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) filed a public notice related to the processing of the **Clean Air Act Permit Program (CAAPP) operating permit** for the Prairie State Coal Plant (Prairie State). Prairie State is a coal-fired power plant (1,600MW) with a co-located coal mine, located in southwestern Illinois.

Background: Prairie State has been operating since 2012 without an operating permit. The operating permit is required for major sources of air pollution, including, nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide (CO), volatile organic material (VOM), and lead (Pb). In early 2023, Sierra Club filed a lawsuit against Prairie State alleging they were operating "illegally" due to a lack of an operating permit. As a result of the legal action, the permit process is finally moving along.

Permit Documents: Available here: https://epa.illinois.gov/public-notices/boa-notices.html

Written Public Comments

- Due Monday, March 9, 2026, 11:59pm CST
- Please reference "Prairie State Generating Company, LLC" in all correspondence.
- Comments may be submitted by email to EPA.PublicHearingCom@Illinois.gov.

Prairie State Air Permit Training Slides

Link to slides here.

History of Air Pollution Emissions at Prairie State

Out of Control: The Deadly Impact of Coal Pollution study found that the Prairie State Coal Plant was responsible for 76 premature deaths.

Prairie Rivers Network has a **website** with details and history about the coal plant and mine.

You can review 2023 air pollution data from the USEPA in **this spreadsheet**. We have also summarized some of the data below.

Carbon Dioxide (CO2) (12,434,140 tons): the plant emits more carbon dioxide than any other source in Illinois. It emits nearly twice as much as the next largest source (Baldwin). Carbon Dioxide is a greenhouse gas. ***CO2 isn't a pollutant that harms our lungs, it's a pollutant that is reshaping the climate our kids will live in.***

Methane (CH4) (2,873,753 lbs): the plant emits more methane than any other source in Illinois. Its methane emissions are more than the next two coal plants combined (Baldwin and Newton). Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas, 28 times as potent as CO2 at trapping heat in the atmosphere. ***Methane is like gasoline on the climate fire, it speeds everything up.***

Sulfur Dioxide (SO2) (9,280 tons): the plant emits more SO2 than any other source in IL. In fact, its SO2 emissions are about as much as the next two coal plants combined (Baldwin and Newton). Exposure to SO2 harms the human respiratory system and makes breathing difficult. ***SO_2 pollution sends people, especially children, the elderly, and those with asthma or heart disease, to the hospital.***

Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) (3,924 tons): the plant emits more NOx than any other source in IL. In fact, its NOx emissions are about as much as the next two coal plants combined (Baldwin and Newton). Nitrogen oxides contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog) and fine particulate matter (soot), both of which damage lungs and trigger asthma attacks. **The state of Arkansas and the National Park Service have asked the *Illinois EPA to look into decreasing haze forming pollutants (NOx and SO2) from the Prairie State Coal Plant (source).***

Mercury: Between March 29 and May 1, 2021, Prairie State violated the federal rule governing mercury emissions for plants of its type and size. Prairie State did not report this violation until July 2021, and even then the report was missing important information about the operation of its monitoring equipment. Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin that damages the brain and nervous system, especially in babies and young children. Coal plant mercury pollution contaminates rivers and lakes, and certain populations. ***Mercury pollution is why Illinois families are warned to limit how much fish they consume from our rivers and lakes.***

Coal Ash: In addition to air pollution the Prairie State Coal has a coal ash landfill that is storing >23 million cubic yards of coal ash. You can find out more about their coal ash in our fact sheet.