

Full Transcript of Public Hearing: Mittal Steel and our Health  
November 14, 2007, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm  
Cuyahoga Community College

Hearing paneled by -  
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**Kim Foreman:** We're going to get started. We have a short amount of time to get a lot of information to you. Welcome to this public hearing on Mittal Steel and our Health. These transcripts are being recorded by Felicia Britton from the Cleveland Academy of Court Reporting. Transcripts will be available on Ohio Citizen Action's website. And actually, this afternoon, I'm going to call up Terry Fedor, the plant manager of Mittal Steel, to let him know that, myself, as well as the panelists, will bring a transcript to his office, if he calls me back and wants to see what took place this evening.

Okay, first, I would also like to recognize the officials that are in this audience, Matt Carroll and David Bruckman, from the Cleveland Department of Public Health are here, and Laurie Rokakis from Dennis Kucinich's office is here as well, and we'd like to thank them for coming out this evening.

Like I said, we have specific topics to cover and we have a tight agenda. We want to end promptly at 8:30. The audience will have time to ask questions at the end, but we want to reserve your questions until the end and give respect to the speakers and the panelists. We have six speakers who will testify about Mittal Steel pollution and health and three panelists will have five minutes, after each presenter, to ask questions.

My name is Kim Foreman. I'm from Environmental Health Watch, I'm a health educator, and I perform home visits with families for education and direct service, related to children's environmental health, conditions such as asthma and lead poisoning. I'll let the other two panelists introduce themselves to you.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Good evening. I'm Anne Wise, I'm one of the family docs at Neighborhood Family Practice, which is a community health center with two sites located in the stockyards, at the intersection of Dennison and Ridge Road, and we have a smaller site in Tremont on Professor Street. We see upwards of 17,000 patients a year from babies to great-grandparents. We see a huge number of cardiovascular respiratory diseases, lots of asthma, and lots of chronic upper respiratory conditions in children. Many of our patients, of course, come from Tremont and a few wander over from Slavic Village as well.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** I'm Dan Brustein. I'm an occupational medicine physician. I work with several physicians around Northeast Ohio. I first moved to the Cleveland area in the late '70s when the steel mills down in the flats were not LTV but J&L and United Steel. I got a chance to visit a few of them while working as an OSHA inspector. Since then I generally do occupational medicine, either as an industrial hygienist at first or as an occupational medicine physician.

**Kim Foreman:** On the agenda we have Emily Lee from the American Lung Association, who will speak with you for 10 minutes; Dr. Kathleen Fagan, from the University Hospital Swetland Environmental Health Center, she'll speak for 15 minutes; and a community member from Slavic Village, five minutes; Laurel Hopwood, from North East Ohio Sierra Club, five minutes; Beatty DiNovi, Tremont resident, for five minutes; and Becca Riker, who is a Tremont resident, for five to seven minutes. We will

have open discussion for 15 to 20 minutes, and then closing remarks. If we run out of time, if you were cut off as a speaker, or if we don't get to you and your question, the court reporter is available to add your comments to the report after the meeting. You can see me as well. Please fill out your survey in your seats and hand them to the people at the desk in the back.

So, we are going to get started. First up we have Emily Lee from the American Lung Association.

**Emily Lee:** Good evening. Can everyone hear me? My name is Emily Lee. I am the Program Director with the American Lung Association of Ohio, northeast region, and I was asked to come out today to talk a little bit, to share with you a snapshot of how large of a problem we face with chronic lung disease.

Before I start talking about statistics, I want you guys to keep in mind that according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most lung diseases are categorized as a non-reportable disease. These are diseases that are non-contagious, that are not required by physicians to report to public health authorities when they're diagnosing a patient. So what we do for our lung disease data for the conditions that are not reportable, we use statistics that are available through estimates from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. This system collects data on lifestyles and health status through randomized telephone surveys of adults 18 and over and it's done at the state and national level. So this methodology, in the survey and estimates that we have, prohibits the availability of specific level data like neighborhood data and things like that.

So lung disease is the number three killer in America. It's responsible for one in seven deaths. Lung disease and other breathing problems are the number one killer of babies younger than one. There are more than 35 million Americans living with chronic lung disease today such as asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Tonight, I'm going to specifically address asthma and COPD.

I'm going to start with COPD and then I'll talk about asthma. COPD is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It refers to two lung diseases: emphysema and chronic bronchitis. These are patients that are diagnosed with both. They frequently are diagnosed with both so physicians refer to the term COPD. It does not include other obstructive diseases like asthma. There are about 12 million Americans in the nation that have COPD. There are also an additional 12 million that may have it and don't know it, that haven't been diagnosed. Certain things will increase the likelihood of individuals getting COPD, such as being a current or former smoker, long term or heavy exposure to dusts, fumes, or chemicals that irritate the lungs, and the last one is a genetic condition called alpha-1, antitrypsin deficiency.

COPD is a very costly disease to our health care system. In 2004, the cost to the nation of COPD was approximately 37.2 billion dollars, including 20.9 from direct health care, 7.4 billion in indirect morbidity costs, and 8.9 billion in indirect mortality costs. So that gives you a little bit of a snapshot of what COPD looks like.

Asthma is the next one that I will address. Asthma is a chronic inflammation in the airways with reversible episodes of obstruction. These episodes are brought on by increased reaction of the airways to certain stimuli. So everybody has different stimuli, we are all different. However, one of the triggers or stimuli includes indoor air pollution and outdoor air pollution. Asthma is an important public health issue and it has been described as an epidemic by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. So in 2005, it's estimated about 22.2 million Americans currently have asthma. Of those 22.2, 12.2 million Americans had an asthma attack that year alone.

Asthma is also the most common chronic disorder in children. There is currently about 6.5 million children under the age of 18 who are diagnosed with asthma. Three point eight million of those 6.5 million have suffered an attack in 2005 alone, just for that year. There's close to 1.8 million emergency room visits that are attributed to asthma in 2005.

In Ohio, specifically, there are about 200,000 children who currently have asthma. Given Ohio's current population of about 11.4 million, we are the seventh most populated state in the nation. Of that 11.4 million people, 10.8% of the adults who live in Ohio have asthma. The prevalence rates that we see on a regular basis, that we have most currently, is that African American residents of Ohio are 44% higher than Caucasian residents to have asthma. Within a five mile radius of the facility that we are addressing today, African Americans represent 48.9% of the population.

Income or economically, Ohioans within incomes of \$15,000 dollars or less are 64% percent more likely to have been told that they have asthma than those who are making \$50,000 or more a year. So within a three mile radius of the facility, 40% of the population has an annual household income of less than \$15,000 and 16% have an annual household income of greater than \$50,000 within the three mile radius of the facility.

So the numbers that I presented to you today are staggering. Lung diseases, such as asthma and COPD, do pose a burden not only economically to the health care system but to the daily lives of the individuals who are diagnosed with them and the family who takes care of them. So thank you very much.

**Kim Foreman:** Okay we'll have questions from the panelists.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** You told us that social factors present a risk for asthma. But social factors also often correspond with environmental factors. Is there any way, is there any attempt to separate out the environmental factors, social factors such as house mite debris, cockroach debris, related to the local environment or what about the community environment, things that might be related to local industries?

Emily Lee: So, if I understand your question correctly, you're trying to see if locally we've taken data on asthma prevalence and been able to directly correlate that to environmental issues?

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** We know that poor people are more likely to have asthma, is it because they're more likely to live next to something that gives them asthma or because there's something else in their environment that's more likely to cause that.

**Emily Lee:** That's a very good question and unfortunately there hasn't been definitive data that specifically links it to certain environmental issues we work with because each individual patient has different triggers, and it's been hard to just generalize and say that dust mites are the highest environmental trigger or outdoor air pollution, because each individual asthmatic is different.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Have there ever been studies done to look at asthma in schools, the incidence or the prevalence in a school, mapping it out in different communities and looking at school absences?

**Emily Lee:** Have there been?

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Well, schools are a place where kids are exposed to air.

**Emily Lee:** Yes.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** They come from, usually come from the local neighborhood. I just wondered if there had ever been school-based studies that are looking at local environments.

**Emily Lee:** Well, we do school-based programming and we try to do data such as that, and we are currently working with the different districts and with the Cleveland district in particular to do that. However, we run into a lot of restrictions and barriers on asking specific details from the families on why their students are not coming to school. So we have a lot of issues and barriers from parents saying, "We don't have to release that." And they really don't. So all we can do is general absenteeism.

**Kim Foreman:** Next we will have Dr. Kathleen Fagan from the University Hospital Swetland Environmental Health Center, for 15 minutes.

**Dr. Kathleen Fagan:** Good evening. Thanks very much for having me. I'm going to try to talk about the concerns of those of us in health care, physicians, nurses, and other health care workers who are concerned about the pollution that is coming out of Mittal Steel and about the health effects to the community in the area. I am with the Case Western Reserve Medical School Swetland Center for Environmental Health. I'm a former board member of Ohio Citizen Action.

Actually, before I even talk about that, I just want to say something about the historic nature of this meeting and what we are trying to do to find out about the health effects. We've had steel mills in the flats here for almost a hundred years and no one has looked at the health effects to the people living in these neighborhoods. We have, within a five mile radius, almost 400,000 people living near the steel mill. We have about 50% of the

schools in Cleveland within a five mile radius. Now this is a big problem. No one has looked at it 'till now, so this is an historic event and I'm glad to be part of it.

So, you guys got some information on the pollution that is coming out of the mill, and one of the things we look at, the EPA, under the Clean Air Act, has six criteria pollutants. Six pollutants that they look at to see the state of the air all around the country and those are the particulate matter (little particles), ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and lead. Those are the six EPA criteria pollutants.

We added all those up together to come up with the annual emissions in pounds. And if you look, this is 2006, so this is the most recent statistics. If you look at the mill and how much pollution they put out compared to some of the other Cuyahoga County facilities, it's four times as much as the next highest one. That's a whole lot of pollution coming out of there. We are concerned about that. So we'll talk about a few of them.

We won't have a chance to talk about all of them in detail, but I picked particulates first because that's one of the ones we are most concerned with, the small particulates. These are tiny particles and they come off of all kinds of things, not just Mittal. They come out of car exhaust and truck exhaust, diesel exhaust. They come out of the power plants. They come from all kinds of places. And when they get into the air, we know that they cause a lot of acute health effects. They cause irritation to the eyes and nose and throat. They cause cough, shortness of breath. But we also know from lots of studies, actually, thousands of studies worldwide, that they will increase asthma attacks. Some of the diseases you just heard about, they will cause admissions to the hospital for emphysema, chronic bronchitis, asthma. They will cause emergency room visits for all of these diseases. But what we didn't know until a famous study in the 1990s where they looked at hospital admissions and death rates, we found out that not only that they cause admissions to the hospital, they also cause increase in death rates. So increased deaths for lung diseases and heart diseases. That was a big surprise when we first learned that but that research has been redone many, many times and that's what it is. It shows an increase in heart disease and deaths and lung disease deaths.

The other thing that we think these small particulates do is cause lung cancer. So it is a suspect carcinogen. Some of the most recent research that we've seen shows that these increased particulates are associated with increases in infant mortality rates and low birth weights and in premature births. So it actually even affects babies before they're born. These particulates are very concerning to us.

Some of the other pollution that we're worried about include the nitrogen oxides, that I talked about, they also have, Mittal has lots of nitrogen oxides coming out--they're listed down here, second from the end of the second group.

One of the things that we just found is that pollution is going up, if you compare 2005 to 2006. Nitrogen oxides also come out of lots of the same sources, the cars, the trucks, also from power plants, and from industry. The thing about nitrogen oxide, it has its own problems but it also is a component in the recipe of making ozone. So ozone is

something, it's another criteria pollutant, we try to keep the ozone levels down. And actually in Cuyahoga County, we are out of compliance with EPA for both ozone and small particulates.

Ozone is made from combining sunlight with things like nitrogen oxides and other volatile organics, fumes that get into the air. Both ozone and nitrogen oxides also cause a lot of the same problems that I mentioned with particulates. So they are all additive. They also irritate the eyes and nose and throat. They also cause an increase in asthma attacks. They also increase bronchitis and emphysema and all of these things also increase your risk of respiratory infections. So they cause more colds, more lung infections. These are all, all very concerning. In fact an interesting thing about ozone is that they studied ozone in children at summer camps and found that--they took breathing tests of children at summer camps and found that their breathing went down. Their lungs would get damaged with the increase of ozone levels and that was one of the actual major studies that EPA looked at when they came back with decreasing the ozone regulations to try to get the ozone levels down even farther.

Actually, while I'm on that, one of the questions Dr. Wise asked was about studies of children in schools, and I was looking at studies to see if we can find some about steel mills and neighborhoods around steel mills and there's not a lot. But there was a study, actually from Australia, in some steel mill towns looking at kids in these towns, looking at the air pollution level and they found an increase in breathing problems, respiratory symptoms. And when they did the breathing tests, found damage to their lungs. So there is that study that I know of.

So one of the things that EPA has done was create an air quality index and they're so concerned about the particulates in the ozone, that they actually have encouraged people to look at those air quality indexes on a regular basis. Particularly people who have a high risk of illness. And stay indoors when the air quality index is elevated.

What are some of the other pollutants that we're worried about? There's other pollutants listed here. Sulfur dioxide, there's another one that is a big problem. Again, it causes all the same symptoms that I just mentioned. And sulfur that's coming out can sometimes create a very bad smell. I think you will be hearing about that from one of the other neighbors who will be talking.

The volatile organic particles, those are carbons, compounds, those also create ozone. And then there's a lot of metals coming out of Mittal Steel. Some of the ones that we're most concerned about are lead, which we all know is a very bad toxin, particularly for kids. We still have a big problem with lead poisoning in the City of Cleveland in children. The other one is manganese, which is a neural toxin, neurologic toxin. And we really don't know a lot about what that means to the people living in these neighborhoods. We don't know what it means to be exposed to the manganese. So we're worried about the metals coming out of Mittal Steel.

One of the things I wanted to mention too is that a concept in public health is what we call vulnerable populations. We look at what exposures and we look at groups of people that might be more sensitive or more vulnerable. So like with lead, we know that little children, little toddlers, are more vulnerable to lead poisoning. We look at that and try to make the levels safe for even the little kids. In this situation, where we're talking about Mittal Steel and air pollution and the neighborhood, who's the vulnerable population?

Well, you can tell me from what I just said and what Emily Lee talked about, we know that the young kids and we know that the elderly are vulnerable. We know that people with lung diseases, heart diseases, so sick people are vulnerable. But I also want to look at the whole population in that neighborhood and say to you that all of them are vulnerable because they're all living in a high pollution area for all kinds of reasons, not just Mittal Steel. There's a lot of other industry in that area too and there is, you know, high traffic highways in that area too. And so they're getting pollution from all angles and all sides. So we should do even more to bring those levels even farther down for those neighbors because all of them are vulnerable.

Let me conclude, at this point, that I haven't addressed all the health concerns that are out there, I just talked about the air pollution. You will be hearing about other health concerns from the neighbors. I want to applaud the efforts of these neighbors and Ohio Citizen Action for bringing up these issues and pursuing these issues, pursuing pollution, and pursuing the question about health effects. Because of this, there has been some scientific collaboration now between Metro Health Medical Center and Case Western Reserve School of Medicine and they're beginning to study some of these questions that have never been studied before. So I applaud the efforts to get all of this going.

I'm going to give you a little quote from Lyndon B. Johnson, L.B.J. Back in 1963 after the passage of the Clean Air Act, he said, "The American people have a right to air that they and their children can breathe without fear." And I'm going to paraphrase that with a message to Mittal Steel: The neighbors of Mittal Steel have a right to live in a neighborhood free of pollution and to be free of the fear of exposure to unknown hazards from that steel mill next door. Thank you.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** Kathy, one of the last things you mentioned is that we've had the Clean Air Act for well over 40 years, the EPA for well over 30. The EPA is the Environmental Protection Agency. Why can't we rely on that federal agency to help protect us, the figures that you presented are from that agency, and it seems that that's what it should be designed to do?

**Dr. Kathleen Fagan:** Well, that's a good question. I would like the EPA here to answer that. But, you know, we really can't. Mittal says, "You know, we are meeting the standards." And, you know, maybe they are. We don't really know because we don't have real test results, all they do is do calculations. But Ohio EPA hasn't said they're not meeting them. So I'm looking at these figures and I'm saying maybe the standards aren't good enough either. Maybe we really can't rely on standards the EPA has. But let's ask that question of Ohio EPA.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Is there any ongoing, and perhaps in conjunction with this activity, is there ongoing research looking at maybe emergency room diagnoses or hospital admissions in health care institutions in the area around Mittal Steel versus somebody who lives in Cleveland that might look similar with regard to income and ethnicity but aren't as close to the steel company?

**Dr. Kathleen Fagan:** Yeah, that would be an interesting study. The study that I am aware of right now, that's going on, is looking at ER visits at Metro and comparing, before the mill closed, while the mill was closed, and then after it opened up again, to see if there's some differences there. And actually that study was done, not here, but years ago in Utah. One of the leaders in some of the air pollution research, C.A. Pope III, published research in Utah around the steel mill that had closed and then opened back up again and saw that when it was closed, the hospital, the ER visits for lung disease and asthma decreased and when it opened up again they increased. So that study was done a long time ago in the 80's. But now we're looking at it again at Metro and the medical school to see what is going on there. But there's certainly a lot of other studies that could be done and I'm hoping to interest medical students in some of those other studies.

**Kim Foreman:** I have a question. If someone came to you, who was ill or felt that they were ill from the toxins from the outside air, would you test their blood? Would you find these toxins in their system?

**Dr. Kathleen Fagan:** We could try testing the blood but in general we're not going to find anything, because they aren't--we really don't know what the normal levels of some of these metals are. Lead we know, but the lead in the air isn't going to be high enough for it to elevate a lead level. So we really don't have good tests for a lot of this. It really is what you are experiencing in your neighborhood when you go outside. Is it better when you're away from the neighborhood or away from Mittal Steel? Do your symptoms get worse when you see more pollution coming out of the mill, but we don't have a lot of good tests for that.

Thank you.

**Kim Foreman:** Next, we'll have Ina Roth from Slavic Village.

**Ina Roth:** Good evening. My name is Ina Roth and I live in Old Brooklyn for 29 years and even so, we are farther removed from Mittal Steel than the Slavic Village, Tremont, we still get the pollution. I have white siding on my house and I have to wash it down every year. And when it runs down it looks like black gravy. If it's in our houses it's in our lungs.

I can wash my house down to keep its value and beauty, what can I do about my lungs? The neighborhoods around Harvard/Dennison, and probably Independence, are much worse off than my neighborhood. You go there and you look at the houses, it is just unbelievable that people have to live there. That kids have to grow up. I met some of the

families with children there. When the kids go outside, some of them break out in rashes. They use asthma inhalers. It's a very sad thing to see a small child with an asthma inhaler.

All these diseases that Dr. Fagan and the other ladies talked about, they're preventable. If it's preventable, it's not acceptable. I had cancer. Trust me, prevention is better than treatment. Thank you.

**Kim Foreman:** Next, we have Laurel Hopwood from North East Ohio Sierra Club.

**Laurel Hopwood, RN:** My name is Laurel Hopwood. I'm here tonight standing in the shoes of a registered nurse. In my 34 years of experience, the amount of situations that haunt me, I can count on one hand. One of them I'd like to share with you is an experience of a young child coming in the emergency room with an acute asthmatic attack.

Her eyes are bulging out, it looks like they're falling out of the sockets, her face is beet red, her respiratory rate is tripled, and the look on her face, the look on her face I will never ever forget, it still haunts me. It's a look of--a terrifying look. She doesn't know if she is going get her next breath.

Mortality, this is the people that die from asthma, is on the rise. And the people who live in the area generally if they are of lower income or financial status, have a choice between buying food or medicine. So, of course, they're going to buy food for their families. When you don't have the medicine and you don't have the rescue inhalers to treat the asthmatic attacks, then some of these children are going to die.

I was raised with a golden rule: Do not do unto others which you will not have them do unto you.

Standing in the shoes of the North East Ohio Sierra Club Human Health and Environment Chair, which I volunteer as, we say, Mittal, we encourage you to do the right thing. The technology exists. Use the technology to prevent the pollution. Thank you.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** You're still in the emergency room?

**Laurel Hopwood, RN:** Not right now.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Was it your experience with asthma, just personally, that asthma attacks or asthma conditions for kids are on the rise in this area?

**Laurel Hopwood, RN:** I don't know the statistics.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Not the stats, just the shift work.

**Laurel Hopwood, RN:** No, I don't know the stats. I just remembered what it looks like and it is pretty terrifying.

**Kim Foreman:** Next we have Beatty DiNovi, a Tremont resident.

**Beatty DiNovi:** I moved back to Ohio, I grew up in Ohio, and I moved back to Ohio about a year and-a-half ago from Boston, Massachusetts. And I looked around the area to kind of match what we had in Boston in terms of city life, and I chose Tremont due to the culture and the restaurants and just kind of the neighborhood feel that it had. I looked at our house that we bought several times and never experienced the pollution until really the first day we moved in. Since then it's been pretty much a daily occurrence. I work downtown. I walk or ride my bike to work whenever possible and I would say four, five times out of the week, that I leave my front door I'm kind of blasted with the sulfur, rotten egg smell. It's really kind of disheartening and eye opening and irritating, so much so, that I very rarely open my windows.

I also have an eighteen month old and a nine day old at home, which while I'm concerned about my own health, these stories, Dr. Fagan's stats, really just kind of filled me with a lot of fear for them. I don't generally overreact to things or get emotional about things but the idea, because of where I live, could be causing my children harm, as one of the other people said, it's kind of unacceptable.

It's odd to me that we can call authorities to have somebody stop partying loudly but we can't stop the corporation from really just causing a great deal of harm to our children and to ourselves. It's obvious also that Mittal Steel is going to continue growing, with China, and steel production in general is a growing industry. So I think that we as citizens are the only thing that is going to stop them because obviously the EPA, state and federal EPA are not doing too much about it.

So I want to thank Liz. I don't know where she is. She's kind of gotten me involved in this. Otherwise, I'd just be sitting at home angry. If I would have known that the pollution was as bad as it is, I probably would never have moved to Tremont, especially with children. I am kind of considering getting out of Tremont due to pollution. As we all know, it's difficult to sell a house right now. That's about it.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** Is this problem a topic of discussion among your neighbors?

**Beatty DiNovi:** It is. From the moment I moved in we had block clubs and block parties. I had an argument, I think one of the first weeks I was here, with somebody. They discussed how Mittal Steel is a huge employer, and I do understand that, but I don't think that that excuses them from doing what's right and I don't think that-- the almighty dollar can't be the end of all results.

Yes it's constant. I bring it up every while I can.

Like I said, I moved from Boston, a much bigger city, and much--probably not as much industry--but I never experienced pollution up there that I can smell or see outside of my house like I can now.

It's real odd for me coming back and I like to bring it up as often as possible. Because I think some people seem to have gotten used to it and accepted it as a fact of life.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** You mentioned earlier, as one of your neighbors pointed out, that Mittal is a very important employer in the area. Any folks who live in your neighborhood work in the mill?

**Beatty DiNovi:** No, not that I know of. I'm sure there is somebody but I don't know.

**Kim Foreman:** Thank you. Our last speaker is Becca Riker from Tremont.

**Becca Riker:** Good evening. My name is Becca and I have lived in Tremont for 13 years. I have invested in a home, and in the last two years, I have invested in a business in my neighborhood. I consider myself a good neighbor, and I'm here tonight to ask Mittal Steel to return the favor.

One of the handouts tonight that you received has a timeline of how the neighbors of Mittal Steel and Ohio Citizen Action have been working to try to get Mittal Steel to invest in their plant and talk to us and make a difference in our community. I do want to confirm what Ina Roth said and Beatty and say I have the same problems they do with my house and with pollution. I witnessed two neighbors die of cancer. I've obviously been there a long time, I'm actively involved.

I guess what I'm here to talk about is that we've seen successful, less profitable steel companies invest, for example, AK Steel in Middletown, Ohio did this. They reduced their pollution 90-95%. They did invest 65 million dollars. It's cleaned up the neighborhood. The neighbors can breathe and they're being a good neighbor.

Mittal Steel, it's possible for them to do this. It's possible for them because we're living next to one of the most profitable steel companies in the world. They own 10% of the world steel production and this is a great opportunity for them to become a leader in their industry and to become a good neighbor and provide pollution prevention for everyone in Cleveland, Ohio.

There are experts out there that can work with Mittal Steel. They refuse to take our calls. They refuse to answer our knocks on their door or we've gone down to their plant several times in large groups and they won't talk to us. The point is tonight, that I believe that there is hope. I didn't invest in my home and my business so that I could move to the suburbs and leave the diversity that I live in. I would like to breathe clean air. I would like to stay in Tremont. I would like to stay in Cleveland, Ohio. I believe it's up to Mittal Steel to help me get where I need to be and to help all of you here and the rest of the neighbors in Tremont.

**Kim Foreman:** Thank you. I have a question about the newsletter I've seen them sending out to families, and I want to know more about what the community reaction is to those newsletters?

**Becca Riker:** The Inside Tremont newsletter?

**Kim Foreman:** No, the Mittal Steel newsletters.

**Becca Riker:** The Mittal Steel newsletter? Oh that's a joke. I get that thing and I read it and I have to laugh. To me it's a cover up, it's a scam, and I just think they're doing all sorts of nice things but they're not tackling the real issues. This company has the money. They have the money. Hands down, they can do it. And I don't understand why the largest steel plant in the world doesn't want to invest and be a leader.

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** Let me ask you the same questions that I asked Beatty. Is this a topic of conversation among your neighbors? How did they respond to the Mittal Steel newsletter? And do any of your neighbors work at the mill?

**Becca Riker:** None of my immediate neighbors work at the mill that I know of. I know I attend my block club on a regular basis and I'm actively involved in the community in all sorts of facets. I don't know anyone personally that works at the mill. As far as the newsletter goes, I haven't heard anyone talk about it other than that they put up a wall or they planted some grass and that's not really good enough.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Some of the literature that Citizens Action has put out and among our discussions, talks about the kind of pollution prevention control, the technology that could be implemented, that isn't brand new, that is used in other steel plants, has there ever been anything floated back to you from the mill as to why this is appeasable, or if they're considering it, or we'll get back to you, specifically on the controls, any acknowledgement that you're bringing up this issue?

**Becca Riker:** Zero. None. No return phone calls. Phone call after phone call. You don't get a return call.

**Kim Foreman:** Thank you. Okay you see there is a microphone here so we now will open up the floor for questions. Please keep your questions and answers to two minutes so we can get enough people in.

Emily Lee had to leave. Stu Greenberg with Environmental Health Watch, who works with Emily Lee at the American Lung Association can help answer questions.

**Ron Joranko:** The doctor asked a question of, "Were there any facts about environmental versus social economic causes for lung disease. Correct? Is that about right? My question to Emily was--she said there wasn't any--my question is, are they going to get any or is there any attempt to get that type of data?"

**Stu Greenberg:** My name is Stu Greenberg from Environmental Health Watch. I work with Emily on a number of asthma education projects. Let me try to answer and see if this gets to the heart of it. We work a lot on educating families with asthma about how to deal with triggers in their home. Turns out roaches and rodents and dust mites and mold all are things in the home that trigger asthma. So, in fact, when the roach information came out several years ago Governor Voinovich said, "Well, now that we know cockroaches cause asthma, we don't have to worry about air pollution." That's almost a direct quote. It turns out that outdoor air pollution, the irritation that that—which enters into the lungs, actually makes people more sensitive to the allergens inhaled in the home. So there is a real connection between the outdoor air pollution and indoor pollution so you can't play one off against the other. In terms of the other kinds of social conditions that are related to asthma, there's been some research recently on people that are exposed to vinyls are more likely to have asthma attacks.

Asthma is a very complicated disease, there are all kinds of factors that can--

**Ron Joranko:** My question is, are you going to try to find the separation?

**Stu Greenberg:** Yeah, it's very hard to tease those things apart. There is a lot going on with asthma.

**Ron Joranko:** So the answer is no?

**Stu Greenberg:** Well, I don't know. Yeah-- no, maybe no.

**Kim Foreman:** Do we have another question? Please step up to the mic right here, and ask your question.

**Iesha:** I was going to say first--I'm going to start off by saying I'm Iesha and I go to John Hay Community College. I was just going to ask, don't you think that the mill has helped increase our economy?

**Dr. Anne Wise:** The mill is a really important economic engine for this community. It always has been. I don't think anybody--although we're looking at studies or Metro is looking at studies for health effects before closure, during, while it was down, and now that it's open, no one is saying close the mill because of kids with asthma. What people are saying is the mill, Mittal, the people who handle—the financiers of this mill should be doing the best they can to prevent pollution from this mill.

We are not even asking them to invent technology, it's already out there. The expenditure in the overall budget of this enormous company would not be so great, and the health outcomes and indeed the economic outcomes for this city would be huge because if you have less poor health because of pollution then in the end you are making more money for your community. So, it's win win. I'll pass this along to Dr. Fagan.

**Dr. Kathy Fagan:** The other point that I would make on that issue is that sure it brings in a lot of money to the community but then the community is losing lots of money in all their health care expenses they have. So you have to figure in all the health care expenses of all the diseases it's causing.

**Jeff Buster:** Good evening everyone my name is Jeff Buster. I think the employment issue has actually spun 180 degrees because since this is an air quality area, which is under non-attainment--companies like Toyota and Honda, site their factories in Alabama and Mississippi rather than in Cleveland. If Mittal shut down tomorrow and that huge pollution load came off of our county, we would in fact find many more employers who could locate here because our air quality would have improved. So to think that there is an employment issue here is a red herring. I would say that our employment would increase dramatically if we shut our major polluters down.

**Jessica Metcalf:** Hi, my name is Jessica Metcalf. I'm a neighbor in Ohio City. And one statement that I just wanted to make regarding the question about the economy-- another facility in southern Ohio, AK Steel invested 65 million dollars to reduce their pollution about 99%. This is the same amount that Lakshmi Mittal spent on his daughter's wedding. So that just lets you know the amount of wealth that this company does have. And the fact is that it starts right here in the community, to show them that good jobs and good air go hand and hand. We need to stop believing the myth that good jobs are at the cost of the environment. Thank you.

**Jessica Kramer:** My name is Jessica. I used to be a neighbor in Tremont. I fortunately, I had the opportunity to move to the east side where the air is a lot fresher. I know not everyone has that opportunity, I apologize. I have a question, I don't know if this is for Stu perhaps, I'm not sure. I heard that asthma can be genetic and it can also be environmental. I was wondering how much that was studied--that perhaps it seems to be that it runs in the family because the family has always lived in the same polluted environment for a collective number of years. I don't know if that's been looked at at all.

**Stu Greenberg:** Well, what I was saying earlier is that asthma is a very complicated disease. As far as my understanding, there is very clearly a genetic component in the family history. But not everybody with that family history has the disease. It's very clear that there are exposures that can result in the development of asthma and there may be even critical periods for a child during which if they have certain exposures they are more likely to develop it. So they're connected, but it's not one for one that if you have the family history that you're going to develop asthma. You have to have the exposures. Now even the exposures are complicated because some exposures are protected.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** You can think of it in another fashion that family history may suggest you have a tendency to having twitchy airways and that if you're around some kind of environmental trigger, whether it is allergies or outdoor air pollution. Your family history may be the reason why you respond with asthma where the next person doesn't. It is always more than one factor involved. There are certainly in occupational medicine,

you see people with very pure causes of their asthma like isocyanate exposure but in many cases there's many components involved.

**Jessica Kramer:** I have another question too. In the meantime, while we are questioning Mittal Steel and other industries to clean up the area, what would you suggest to neighbors to do, perhaps with their indoor air pollutants as far as filters? Are there plants better than others to help clean the air? Or in Tremont, do they need to dust the house every single day, every morning? Are there any methods that work better than any others? Specific house plants?

**Stu Greenberg:** I think that is a myth. Plants are not going to purify the air in any substantial way. In fact, if you had a lot of plants, you are more likely to have mold, mold is often an asthma trigger. The dust that you track in and the dust that blows in has particulates that get stirred up and then you breathe that inside your home. So there is a whole range of particulates, it can be useful to have special vacuum cleaners, like vacuum cleaners with a HEPA filter, to just vacuum frequently to just reduce the load of particulate matter. And the variety of triggers that come from the outside. Take your shoes off. People say that they have to keep their windows closed.

**Steven Danklef:** In what ways does Mittal Steel protect the health of its employees?

**Dr. Dan Brustein:** I think that those of us who are here are not prepared to answer that question. But there is a reason why I ask whether the folks who spoke earlier had neighbors who work at the mill. How many of you have family members or neighbors who work at the mill? Yeah, maybe four or five of you. I'm sure that if this question had been asked 20 years ago and if there were 17,000 people working at the mill the response would be much greater. I think that's something we have to remember here. I don't have the answer but I want to emphasize that question, is that before that particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur compounds etc. gets into our air, it gets into the air of the work place of the folks who are down there.

Those people need jobs but they also need their health and a recognition of the fact that the folks who work at the mill are the ones who are most threatened by the pollution the mill produces and are potentially great allies in the community is something that's really important to recognize. The fact that there are fewer and fewer of them now than there used to be makes them scared for their jobs and makes it much more difficult of a problem. But if we don't address that issue we'd end up making enemies of folks who are potentially strong allies in cleaning up the air in the work place and the air in the community.

**Dr. Paul Nickerson:** I just wanted to play devil's advocate here for a moment. I'm trying to place myself in Mittal Steel's position. And I wondered, we're looking at this maybe from a different perspective. They say, the EPA says, they're doing okay. Legally, their hands are clean and if they disregard the moral ethical aspect, which is really what we are looking at here, they can sleep well. And I wondered if our efforts are being misplaced or at least could they be directed elsewhere. Can we put anything on the

EPA's back? I bet they would listen to something from a legal standpoint more than from an ethical or moral standpoint. I wondered if that is something worthwhile spending some effort on.

I have to bring this in because it seems so amusing to me. I saw an article from Islamabad, Pakistan and I think it was Mittal Steel, but anyway, the Chief Justice there in Pakistan closed the steel plant because they did not meet their pollution standards. So here's Pakistan doing a better job than we are from a pollution standpoint. Of course he fired the justices over there I think. Thank you.

**Jane Halbedel:** Good evening. I'm Jane from the Ohio Sierra Club. It's been a while since I revisited Mittal statistics. I do want you to know that it's a multi-million dollar operation. We're talking about a plant, they're talking about oil ships. There are employers on the oil ships. There is a multi-layer industry that supports Mittal Steel. Now, problematically, Mittal Steel is at 70% of the maximum achievable standards. Which means they could pollute, as I recall, 69 more percent.

So, in terms of where to put your efforts, look at the laws. Look at your councilman. Look to whom you vote in the oncoming election. If environmental policy is not on their agenda, then you must make it be so.

The other thing with Mittal Steel is that it is one of the most efficient operations in the world. International people come to tour this facility because of its efficiency, but if you are doubling its output per hour you're also doubling the pollution. I shudder as I drive through the valley, and see the particulate in the air. I refused to walk my dogs last night because I can see the particulates in the air.

We have a choice. You don't vote, you are stuck with what you have. You don't put pressure on your congressmen or your representatives - we are here, next year, and the following year. So it is imperative that you also get the younger vote to turn out. Thank you.

**Mike Rubicz:** My name is Mike Rubicz and I'm a retired steelworker. I spent 28 years—not at this mill, but at another mill--and I don't see the effort to try to clean up the air as something bad, it's something good. Workers at the mill benefit first of all from that. You know I spent the last 20 years--I went through three bankruptcies in the mill where I worked and we fought very hard to keep our plant there and I have no problem doing that because I think the steel industry is an important employer, but it should be cleaned up. There is no reason why the community has to suffer. Mittal has the money and and Mittal has the wherewithal to do a much better job.

I think somebody talked about them being an example for other steel industries, that's the way they should be. Since they're the largest steelmaker in the world, they should be one of the cleanest in the steel world. I do feel that when people worry about the employment issue that somehow they think that the environment costs so much it'll force the steel industry out of here - that is not true. The plant where I worked just spent five million

dollars so they can have less pollutants in the air. If they can do it and they're a much, much smaller, I think they're twelfth largest in the country, which is pretty small, and they put that kind of money into it. I think Mittal can too. Thank you.

**Steve Ilg:** My name is Steve Ilg. Liz Ilg is my daughter. That's all I have to say. We travel with Ohio Citizen Action to clean up neighborhoods, the exterior of the homes, to create awareness, I see many of the people who volunteer here and the neighbors. And as we go home to home and chat with people they talk about what gardens they used to have, they can't have the gardens anymore they told us, that it would be much too hazardous to eat the fruit and vegetables that they grow in that neighborhood. I don't know why. I guess that's a question for anyone.

**Dr. Anne Wise:** Well, I do know that there is a garden that my old practice in Tremont helped sponsor. And I think, if I recall, the first year they grew a garden, the practice is fairly new there, we couldn't eat anything from it because someone had tested for lead content and it was too high in some of the vegetables. I think we used different-- the second year the cultivation was done somewhat differently and we were able to take things home. But there have been instances certainly at the community gardens of having higher metal levels in their vegetables than they would like, when they've done the testing of course, which is not routine.

**Kim Foreman:** Do we have any more questions?

**Charlene Phelps:** My name is Charlene Phelps and I'm a retired registered nurse. I spent 42 years in nursing; 34 years here in the Cleveland area. I've been a supporter of Ohio Citizen Action for at least a decade. So I commend your efforts. I've been sitting there thinking about previous comments but one that comes to mind is we have a change in leadership in terms of the state. We have a new governor. I don't know how helpful the Ohio Department of Health can be but I know those are political appointments also. But the fact of the matter is, I don't know where this information will go other than Mittal. But I suggest that it go to your legislators in the State of Ohio, it go to the governor, it go to the Department of Health, I mean, as many people as we can get to pay attention to this. I think we need to do that.

**Deanne Malaker:** I'm Deanne Malaker. I live in the Tremont neighborhood. I'm glad to see many of my neighbors here tonight. I just wonder if the representatives from the City Health Department could tell us whether or not the city has any plans to do anything about the pollution?

**Matt Carroll:** I'm Matt Carroll. I'm the Director of the Department of Public Health. Really I appreciate what people have said tonight about personal concerns and general health concerns. I don't think we would question any of the information that has been presented tonight.

David Bruckman is here tonight as well. David is our biostatistician. One thing that he has done, similar to what Metro is doing with that study, is to look at our EMS data in the

City of Cleveland and see if there are any patterns that developed for EMS runs that are breathing related. So David is-- has done some work related to that and put some information together. As far as Deanne's question about what are we going to do, we have approached the issue really from two perspectives: one, is as a general Public Health Department, be concerned about air pollution, be concerned about the health effects that air pollution causes. And then the second aspect is we're regulatory, we have a role in the regulatory process as I think many of you know, we are the local agent of the Ohio EPA.

We have a role in the regulatory process for a place like Mittal and for other industries and other agencies in the county. What we have done, and I think it's been expressed several times tonight, is we have not to date found any serious violations with what Mittal is doing. I think I would say to date, so far, I would say that's been our analysis, I think that's fairly well been confirmed by other departments and other agencies.

That's certainly not the end of the story. I think we as a department are very open to what our actions, steps, in this area what can we do in general. Whether it's on the side of regulation or whether it's on the side of trying to encourage voluntary action. I'm personally very convinced-- I took great note of what happened in Middletown. I've heard that before. But I think that we as an organization are interested in being part of this process.

So we'd like to hear from you. If you have suggestions, strategies for us, if you think that we can help pull some data together that might be of use, we want to hear that. How do you think that we can be part of this voluntary discussion or solution? We want to be part of that. We have some knowledgeable people who can add to this discussion. So as far as what we are going to do, we want to be a part of it. We know that on the regulatory side, you have to have the goods. You have to be able to have a strong case. You have to be able to show violations in order to take action. But we're not closing any doors. We're not making any conclusory statements. We again offer our, whatever research, whatever assistance we can provide in general.

**Jane Halbedel:** I attended the stationary sources meeting at NOACA. My recollection is there are only two monitor sites. I'm wondering whether or not as a public health organization you could lobby to have them in different locations, particularly among the communities that are addressed and impacted because with the prevailing winds that is going to be a major-- going to be a major source of changing the directions of the pollution and if that monitoring site is not in a tactical placement, the cities that have been addressed then, we may not be getting accurate readings.

**Matt Carroll:** We have tried to add some monitor sites and we did add a couple within the last year or two. Another thing we've done locally and this is more of a consumer or citizen program, this is really at the suggestion of advocates like yourselves. We have a program where citizens can get a summa canister from us, collect air samples, we'll have the air samples tested, and then report back on what we find. That's something that's been done across the state.

As far as other monitors or what's already been done, we're hoping to try to be part of that discussion to see what we can do to make that happen. I don't think we make that decision but whether we can be involved in effecting it, I think that is possible.

**Jane Halbedel:** I actually had the Division of Air Quality out to my home, and basically it's planes, trains, automobiles, diesels, trucks, construction sights, and I have had growing concerns over the past year because it is a comprehensive problem. What can you do even with immediacy, to help our community, because our community is being so impacted even by trains and the soot that is comes from the trains, from the school buses?

**Kim Foreman:** I'm sorry. We're going to stick to questions regarding Mittal and then maybe you could talk with her after regarding the other issues.

**Mary Jo Muser:** Hi my name is Mary Jo Muser and I live in Old Brooklyn. I lived there for six years. It doesn't take a rocket scientist and it doesn't take figures to know it's getting worse. The house is filthy. I'm cleaning it every week. I'm sick of it. Our dog died from tumors. I'm sure that had a lot to do with it.

Also, I've done walk-and-talks, just talking to the neighbors, going from door to door and there's a lot of sick people in my community. Heart disease is very prevalent and I would venture to say out of 20 houses that I talked to, 15 of them have kids sick with asthma, heart disease, people in their family have heart disease, and the skin rashes, which my roommate right here breaks out in all the time. Everybody we talk to, up and down the street, are saying the same thing, "our kid has this rash, too. We have this rash, too." So I will venture to say that if there was just a couple of simple health surveys in one neighborhood versus another neighborhood, you would see the numbers right there, it would be real simple.

On Sundays, I notice it's particularly bad when you drive over the bridges. It's down right disgusting on Sundays, which I figure is because the EPA offices are closed. So they open up their pipes and really let it pump out. It was so bad Sunday I'm not kidding. Especially when it's raining, when it's gray, they're especially nasty. So that would be the time to nail them.

**Christina Ebert:** Hi, I'm Christa Ebert. I work at Ohio Citizen Action and I live in Ohio City. And I have one of those Ionic Breezes and I have to clean it every day. I can see the flare from my window. And one thing I did want to point out, and correct me if I'm wrong, but as far as I know, the companies are allowed to do their own testing that they report to the EPA. So who knows if those are even correct. They're also allowed to use past figures from other plants and from their plant.

And I know I've done a lot of dealings with Ohio Citizen Action and invited many councilmen and congressmen, I know we have a representative from Kucinich's office here and thank you for being here. But it is harder than it sounds to get backing from

them. So if you want it, you have to demand it yourself and then hope that they back you up too. But you have to start somewhere. That is why we are all here today.

**Amy Coursen:** I'm Amy Coursen. I also live in Tremont and I have a little son who does have high lead counts. Besides that, I wanted to say in response to Jane there are air quality monitors in Tremont by Lucky's Cafe. There's also one in Newburgh Heights that Cleveland Division of Air Quality has control over. There's also one at G.T. Craig's right down the street there's an air quality monitor. You can get those monitor readings. You can call the Cleveland Division of Air Quality and they will tell you. You know if you want to look at EMS emergencies based on asthma attacks versus air quality, you can look at that. I don't know if you can really relate that to Mittal Steel because there are so many other factors that go into air quality. But as far as in your homes if you live in Tremont, something to watch-- you don't want to be outside when those monitors are going over, so. Look at the monitors. You can go to [noaca.org](http://noaca.org). We have a map you can just go over them and look at what those readings are, so. Just information for everyone.

**Kim Foreman:** We have time for one more.

**David Bruckman:** Hi, I'm David Bruckman. I'm the biostatistician at the Cleveland Department of Public Health. I actually did the analysis of Cleveland EMS data that looks at the number of responses, rescue responses, by Cleveland EMS for asthma and wheezing. And I had access to data through the EMS and the water department. I looked at data for a little over a year and some of the interesting things we saw were actually increases in asthma calls usually in May or October. These could be seasonal. We really don't have a definitive diagnosis from the calls; we just have the chief complaint with the reason of the call.

Also, due to privacy concerns, I was only given access to the census tract, not the address, nor did I have the gender. I did get the age. So we can tell at least if that person was a child or an adult. Now, what we did also find was that of those people who call, many of whom were actually located downtown, and in the downtown area. But also those calls were during business hours. Now on average, there are about three EMS calls for asthma or wheezing within the Cleveland area and that high can get as high as nine, and twelve, and it can get as high as seventeen at one time. That's just for wheezing and asthma. That doesn't include any other chief complaint. So what we've seen, it's very hard to contribute to a particular cause. We don't know whether the person was a male or female. We don't know whether they have a smoking history or heart disease. So in terms of attribution, it is really difficult for us.

Now we published all of this information. It has been on our website. You can go to [ClevelandHealth.info](http://ClevelandHealth.info). It's actually a site that we work on jointly with the county. You can actually pull up those results yourself and do have-- what you'll notice there is that most people who call are between 40 and 59. And I really think we need to consider smoking history as a major factor in indoor environmental health, not just a trigger but for setting up people to be more likely to have COPD or other conditions.

But certainly I invite you to go to our website at [ClevelandHealth.info](http://ClevelandHealth.info) and take a look at this, take a look at this data. Thank you.

**Kim Foreman:** It's 8:25 now and what we're going to do is make sure that everyone has signed in. There is going to be a follow-up meeting after Thanksgiving and you can also contact Ohio Citizen Action for more information or to let them know that you want information about the next steps.

If you did not get to make your statement at this mic, you can see me and we can go over to the reporter and you can make a statement and she'll make sure it gets on the record.

Thank you for coming out and please fill out your surveys. Make sure you are on the sign-in sheet and contact Ohio Citizen Action for more information.

#### COMMENTS ENTERED AFTER THE HEARING:

**Kendra Ulrich:** Earlier about the increase in asthma rates and how much people in the area have an increase in asthma rates. I'm not a health expert but I do talk to people on a daily basis. I can tell you that frequently I talk to people that moved to Cleveland from out of state and other areas in the state that have been diagnosed with asthma after moving to Cleveland or the children have had respiratory problems in Cleveland too.

Definitely this place has air pollution that we're experiencing on a daily basis. It definitely impacts our health care. This city and the people of the city have a right to breathe clean air. People moving here have a right to move here for the economy but not having to sacrifice their right to breathe freely.