

U.S. Steel must pay \$2.2M fine, reduce Detroit area air pollution

U.S. Steel Detroit River.jpg

U.S. Steel Corp. on the Detroit River.

(NOAA)

ECORSE, MI -- U.S. Steel must reduce air pollution from its Zug Island foundry on the Detroit River under a settlement reached with the U.S. Department of Justice and three Great Lakes states this week.

Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel must perform \$1.9 million worth of environmental improvement projects and pay a \$2.2 million in fines as part of the [consent decree](#) filed Tuesday, Nov. 22 in federal court in the Northern District of Indiana.

The settlement resolves Clean Air Act litigation initiated by the federal government and the states of Michigan, Illinois and Indiana in August 2012.

The agreement does not resolve litigation between U.S. Steel and the Michigan Department of Quality [filed by the company this year](#) over a state administrative rule requiring U.S. Steel [reduce harmful sulfur dioxide emissions in the Detroit area](#). That case is pending before Court of Claims Judge Stephen Borrello.

Under the federal settlement, U.S. Steel must spent \$800,000 to remove contaminated transformers in Ecorse and Gary, Ind., and immediately repair and later replace a bell top on a blast furnace at its Great Lakes Works in Ecorse.

The bell top has a worn seal that is causing increased pollution emissions.

U. S. Steel will also make improvements, following a third-party study, at its Great Lakes Works' steel-making shop to reduce emissions-causing opacity.

The company has agreed to pay for new energy efficient lighting at schools in southwest Detroit, Ecorse and Gary that are lit with fluorescent ballasts that may contain toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

U.S. Steel will also install vegetative buffers like trees, bushes and shrubs on public land near high-traffic roadways in southwest Detroit in order to reduce particulate matter movement and improve downwind air quality.

Southwest Detroit has been called the "[epicenter of asthma burden](#)" by health officials because of noxious sulfur dioxide emissions from industry. Wayne County has the highest number of pediatric asthma cases in Michigan, according to a 2014 American Lung Association report, and the prevalence of asthma among Detroit adults is 50 percent higher than of Michigan as a whole.

"We welcome the settlement with U. S. Steel and look forward to the improvements to be made at its Ecorse facility, schools in Ecorse and Detroit and along high traffic roadways in Southwest Detroit," said DEQ director Heidi Grether. "More importantly, we welcome the improvement in the air quality of the region that we expect will come from these changes."

In Gary, U.S. Steel will remove and dispose of discarded tires around town. The company must repair a large opening in a metal shell that surrounds a blast furnace in its Gary Works Foundry to eliminate excess emissions.

In Illinois, U. S. Steel will buy the St. Louis suburb of Granite City a new street sweeper equipped with enhanced capability to reduce dust emissions, install energy-efficient doors in local schools and create a greenway and bike trail.

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