

ESG Chronicle Newsletter: Health Versus Pollution

In our fast paced world of condensed and compressed populations with heavy reliance upon industry and use of petrochemicals it is simply impossible to expect crystal clear air and zero pollution. However a balanced system of priorities between health and pollution should be a reasonable expectation.

The implications of a biased approach favouring industry over health will have dire consequences especially within areas of low socio-economic activity close to heavy industry. These specific high risk areas can have the daunting prospect of continued serious illnesses such as respiratory disease, cancers, genetic malformations and anaemia. In addition, as disease develops in a slow and insidious manner, with a gradual build up within the body, individual communities could harbor a general lowered immunity and vulnerability which could impact for many years to come.

The complexity of the human body and the multi-causal nature of disease formation make analysis of links between toxins and health extremely difficult. As science has found with smoking the level of toxicity that each person can handle greatly varies and many factors will influence the timing and type of disease presentation. Such factors include genetic predisposition, stress, diet, exercise and personality (attitude). With these factors taken into consideration some individuals are more effective at toxic removal and repair than others!

However all people have a limit where the process of detoxification becomes inadequate – this results in the initiation of illness. How quickly this develops and to what extent it progresses will depend upon the external factors and the toxic level of exposure. Consequently as the toxic levels rise and proximity to the source becomes ever nearer the dice becomes loaded and the risks become high!

The results of this situation are already being acknowledged by leading scientists and epidemiologists with clusters of disease formation around industrial ‘hot spots’. Swift action with stringent enforcement of limits of carcinogens and dangerous chemicals must be called for!

A policy of action after the event simply does not work out either health-wise or economically. The health industry will become strained and overloaded with expensive disease treatments. The debilitating aspect of pollution related disease and the length of treatment will make continued employment difficult thus impacting upon the social care system. With this in mind the serious responsibility and strength of our leaders to protect vulnerable communities from pollution poisoning is of critical importance.