

PERRO Position Statement on Pure Metal Recycling's proposal to build a Metal Shredder in Pilsen

1. Air, soil and water pollution: Metal recycling facilities around the country have a history of contaminating the air, water and soil in and around their facilities. For a snapshot to the scale of the problem, we encourage you to take a look at the following links that discuss a study recently conducted by the City of Houston Texas...

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Danger-in-air-near-metal-recyclers-4154951.php#0>

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195925513000358>

http://troyhernandezdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/shredder_14_04_04.pdf

Similar investigations have revealed serious problems in California as well...

<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/EPA-cracks-down-on-Redwood-City-metal-recycler-2455296.php>

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/sep/07/local/la-me-scrap-metal-20120907>

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/11/local/la-me-recycle-20120812>

2. Fires and explosions: Fires and explosions are a major, consistent and common problem at metal recycling facilities. A quick Google search will reveal dozens of recent examples from around the country. We encourage you to listen to this brief phone interview with Darren Snyder who dealt with this problem in Elkhart Indiana where the community had to fight for years to shut down a dangerous metal shredding operation in their town...

<https://archive.org/details/DarrenElkHartMetalShredderEdited>

You can also check out this article and video from a community in Oklahoma who has also had constant problems with explosions...

<http://newsok.com/residents-of-oklahoma-city-neighborhood-sound-off-about-recycling-yard/article/3896800>

We were able to find references to over a dozen examples of fires and explosions in just the last year alone.

We also encourage you to look at this report from a company that ensures metal recyclers as it emphasizes the scale of this problem in the industry. Note in the report were it states... "As we have seen, scrap metal facilities have many fire hazards...In the last three years, at least 23 fires and explosions have occurred at scrap metal facilities in California alone. Newspaper reports about fires at scrap metal facilities seem to occur weekly." Keep in mind this is a pro-industry source...

<http://media.genre.com/documents/FacMatters201302-en.pdf>

3. The metal recycling industry is considered the **fourth deadliest industry** in America as explained in the following article on a pro-metal recycling industry website. Note the sentence in the article that states... "While all industrial processes involve risk, few operations are more potentially hazardous than metal recycling. It involves both sharp and heavy objects being loaded and unloaded and heavy equipment, shearing, torching, breaking, chopping, crushing, compacting, bailing and shredding." Again, this is a pro-industry source that is describing the scale of the danger represented by this industry...

<http://www.pkmetals.com/metal-recycling-safety-found-lacking/>

4. The increased truck traffic associated with this facility will seriously congest nearby intersections like the one at Cermak, Blue Island and Ashland and will add to the already high level of diesel engine fumes into the neighborhood's air. Note the above article on the PKMetals website ironically includes a link to a YouTube video that provides a sense of the scale of truck traffic that is likely.

5. Pure Metal Recycling has attempted to distance themselves from Acme Refining, but we all know that those behind this effort are all directly connected to Acme which has serious pollution, safety, financial and legal problems with their existing facilities in the Bridgeport Community. How can we trust a company whose current operations have serious problems?

Potential Health Problems of a New Metal Shredder in Pilsen

By Brandon Bordenkircher

Chicago Public Schools exist in an atmosphere of extreme segregation due to decades of racist public policies and market forces. Some results of this intense segregation include economic disparity, racist probationary policies, and the criminalization of students. However, one result that remains invisible is the unequal distribution of environmental burdens, such as air/water pollution, among CPS students of color. Exposing children to pollution during their crucial years of physical and cognitive development can lead to diminished cognitive functioning and chronic health problems that last a life time.

Chicago has historically dumped hazardous chemicals in communities of color. This selective dumping of hazardous waste has deleterious effects on people of all ages living in the targeted communities, but the negative impact is greatest on the children growing up in those communities. Children are more vulnerable than adults to the effects of pollution because their lungs are not yet fully developed (Kleinman 2000). Children also breathe in more air relative to their weight and they spend more time outside when air pollution levels are the highest (Kleinman 2000:1). Childhood is a pivotal period for cognitive development and children exposed to air pollutants perform poorly on cognitive function tests (Wang et al 2009:1612); and they demonstrate impaired neurological function (Calderón-Garcidueñas et al 2008:117).

Studies also show that children exposed to air pollution have lower IQ scores compared to children who are not exposed to pollution (Suglia et al 2008:280). Further, when children are exposed to high levels of nitrogen dioxide in the air, their quantitative and working memory decreases (Freire et al 2010:223). Children with high levels of estimated exposure to by diesel exhaust have a decreased ability to perform well on both verbal and nonverbal intelligence and memory assessments (Suglia et al 2008:280). Schools located in areas with the highest air pollution levels were found to have the lowest attendance rates and the highest proportions of students who failed to meet state educational testing standards (Mohai et al 2011). A recent

study in California found that students exposed to a high level of respiratory risk from outdoor air pollution suffered from lower performance on standardized tests (Pastor et al 2006:337).

The well-being of children is championed as a high priority in Chicago, but the actions of big business demonstrate just the opposite. For example, Pure Metal Recycling is proposing a facility in the Pilsen neighborhood that would be located directly across the street from Benito Juarez Community Academy. This proposed location is a problem because Pilsen is already home to SIMS Metal Management, one of the two metal recycling shredders currently operating in Chicago; and SIMS is located just three blocks away from Benito Juarez Academy, which means the Pilsen community will be subjected to twice the amount of hazards that any other community is subjected to. There are a total of thirty-eight schools in the Pilsen-Little Village neighborhoods which includes twenty-seven elementary schools, one middle school, and ten high schools. And this proposed metal recycling facility could potentially harm the 23,443 students that live and learn in the Pilsen-Little Village neighborhood (Chicago Public Schools : Policies and Guidelines 2013).

Fires, smoke, and explosions are a common occurrence at scrap metal facilities. An explosion at a California metal recycling facility resulted in what felt like "an earthquake" followed by fire raining down onto members of the community. Two co-workers at a nearby catering business suffered burns when their clothes caught fire. To make matters worse the noxious fumes released by the explosion kept about 1,000 students at the nearby elementary school confined to their classrooms without air conditioning all day (Garrison 2012). A metal recycling facility in the small town of Sardis, Missouri sent a huge piece of an old oxygen tank flying into a nearby woman's home. Another neighbor reported that his windows were blown out by a different explosion (Reese 2012). In December 2013 there was an explosion followed by a fire at a California metal recycling plant. The fire burned for more than eight hours before being controlled. Officials advised residents in the area to stay indoors with their doors and windows closed (Almanac News 2013). The city of Houston has had it's share of problems with their

metal recycling facility. Members of the community have called in complaints of red smoke, yellow smoke, explosions, fires, and children with difficulty breathing (Lobet 2012).

Another dangerous side effect of scrap metal recycling is the large amount of hazardous materials they deal with, including battery acid, lead, cadmium, chromium, arsenic, and dangerous VOCs (volatile organic compounds that emit dangerous gases). These hazardous materials will be in the air of not only the scrap metal recycling facility, but also in the environment directly around it. Air pollution was significantly reduced in the Pilsen community in the past decade when the Fisk Station was closed and when new pollution controls were implemented at H. Kramer and Company. At this point, building another metal recycling plant in the neighborhood will reverse all of the progress the Pilsen community has achieved.

A vast body of evidence demonstrates that pollution disproportionately affects low-income, communities of color at a higher rate than it affects white communities with the same or lower socioeconomic status. "The average fine imposed on polluters in white areas was 506% higher than the average fine imposed in minority communities" (Mills 2001:88). Consequently, if we compare a low-income white community to a middle-class community of color, the middle-class community of color would have a greater chance of being targeted for a hazardous waste facility (Ewall 2012). Low-income communities of color bear a higher environmental risk burden than the general population and the EPA's inspections often fail to adequately protect low-income communities of color (Ewall 2012). Disparities in government enforcement of the Federal Clean Water Act support claims made by environmental justice advocates that laws are enforced in white neighborhoods more often than in low-income neighborhoods occupied by people of color (Konisky & Schario 2010:1).

Another metal recycling plant in the Pilsen neighborhood could reverse all the progress the community has made. These studies indicate that the location of a school can significantly increase children's exposure to pollution and consequently decrease their cognitive functioning,

resulting in disastrous effects on their school performance. Chicago cannot champion our children's education and their physical well-being as a high priority if we are standing by idly while the actions of the people in power state the opposite.

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