

# US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association

a not-for-profit corporation

*"Protecting the public's health, environment, property and promoting safety."*

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First, let me tell you a little about our organizations:

Locally, the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare (AReCO) represents members in 28 communities, including Chicago, that are affected by O'Hare Airport operations.

Nationally, US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association is the leading public-advocacy group focusing on aviation issues, representing various municipalities and organizations; it speaks for about 1.5 million individuals in the United States. Internationally, the Association is also a non-governmental organization, representing member and associate organizations in 27 countries.

Our membership includes physicians as well as individuals who are employed in the aviation and aerospace industries: pilots, air-traffic controllers, employees of NASA and Boeing, and Baylor University's School of Aviation Sciences as well as cities, citizens and civic groups, and others. As a result, we have in-depth knowledge of the issues, bringing strong factual evidence to the table.

Basically, the air transport industry and others associated with it have all been lying a little, some a lot. I remember a meeting regarding the closing of the military base at O'Hare. The meeting started out with officials claiming that there was no ground pollution problem at O'Hare; until, it seemed to me, they asked me to introduce myself. After that they changed their story to admitting that they had some ground pollution problems. Quite frankly, there isn't an airport that we have looked at that doesn't have serious ground pollution problems. We know what's there. Fabrications like those I heard at that meeting have resulted in airport and aircraft emissions being one of the worst environmental problems that have caused one of the worst public health problems we face today. One of the scariest phone calls I have ever received, and there have been

*Advocating a sustainable, equitable and accountable aviation industry.*

many, was from US-EPA headquarters. I think it was after we settled one of our lawsuits against the airports, and they asked me to fill them in on the aviation problems and issues because they have been out-of-the-loop. It appears that the FAA, along with the private aviation industry, and not US-EPA, has been basically in charge of airport and aircraft environmental issues.

I hope to make it clear to you that "dilution is not the solution to pollution" especially when it comes to persistent and bioaccumulative toxins, because that scheme only results in someone getting sick, passing the problem on genetically to the unborn, or possibly dying. Around airports, millions of people now drink jet fuel, de-icing chemicals, and other toxic chemicals that have contaminated their drinking water supplies. By-the-way, as I mentioned, because every industry is lying at least a little, most of these people are drinking dioxins and other horrible toxic chemicals from the deicing and anti-icing fluids, and I know that the manufacturer claims the composition of these fluids is trade secrets. I have visited the sick families myself. I have heard so many people's pleas from all over the states regarding many airports about their lack of sleep from the jet noise, and highly worrisome clusters of cancer, brain tumors, and other illnesses are linked to airport operations. We need environmental leadership on airport problems, not just the lip service we are getting from officials and the air transport industry.

My intent is not to scare anyone with the alarming public health and environmental problems that are associated with airports and aircraft. I simply want to present you with the facts from the studies, many of which are now posted on our website ([www.us-caw.org](http://www.us-caw.org)) for public viewing.

Our health and that of our children must be protected from both current and future airport and aircraft operations. These operations generate staggering amounts and various and unusual types of toxic air, noise, ground, and water pollution. The aviation industry is largely unregulated, and the meager regulations that do exist are enforced only loosely.

In addition to the significant and very disturbing impacts that aircraft have on our upper atmosphere, the emissions from airports and aircraft operations pose a major health threat. They have been linked to cancer, asthma, brain tumors, emphysema, heart disease, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, kidney damage, and numerous other conditions. Evidence shows air emissions from airports and aircraft operations expose an extremely large number of people living and working at distances greater than 20 miles from a facility. A study commissioned by four Chicago-area communities found that O'Hare International Airport emitted over 200 air toxins and that it presented unacceptable cancer risks to people living and working within 32 miles of the airport. Yet, shockingly, 70% of our nation's population resides within 20 miles of a major airport.

Likewise, other studies from around the world, from many different sources, including states, countries, school districts, airport workers and communities, all show

that airport and aircraft-generated pollution are potentially lethal to people who live and work even many miles from airports.

The aviation industry tries to downplay the adverse impacts of airport and aircraft operations. However, O'Hare's own data shows that it is the top hazardous and toxic polluter in the entire state of Illinois. New York's Kennedy and La Guardia airports are New York's number-1 and 2 NOx polluters, respectively. The truth however, might actually be closer to what is reported in other countries. London's Heathrow Airport (BAA) admitted that it generates over half of most major pollutants in the surrounding area, which includes London (1994 data). Similarly, the same can be said for Frankfurt, Zurich and others. We can only then deduce that the problems are much worse than the federal government or the air-transport industry admits to.

When air-transport officials discuss pollution, they group many pollutants together in an attempt to minimize the problem. The industry claims that they are responsible for a small percentage of the total emissions, perhaps 2-4%. If correct, it is still a staggering amount in itself, considering that there are only thousands of commercial aircraft; however, there are many other important factors to consider: First, it is not necessarily the amounts of pollution but the specific types of toxics and their particulate size. Second, one must consider the fact that about 90% of the toxic and criteria air pollutants are emitted at or near the airport. Also, a large percentage of jet emissions are still unidentified (unknown). Finally, there are many other factors that one must consider such as the synergistic (toxic cocktail effect), atmospheric, solar, decomposing, combustion and other trigger effects. It is those factors and others that make airport and aircraft pollution one of the worst environmental problems we face today.

According to the American Cancer Society, men have a one-in-two chance of being diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime; for women, the rate is one in three. A study commissioned by the Los Angeles School District for the Santa Monica Airport expansion, where there are only 205,000 flights per year, revealed that the cancer risk for maximally exposed individuals was 13 to 26 per million; the so-called acceptable risk criterion is only 1 per million. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, exceeded only by heart disease—and we haven't even begun to investigate the potential link between heart problems and airport operations.

Simply put, aviation impacts pose a hidden public health issue affecting vast segments of the population.

For technical reasons, emissions from aviation operations are different than those from other sources and their risk threshold is much lower. The Los Angeles School District study found that flight volumes of only about fifteen jets per day were associated with a significant increased cancer rate among residents living under the flight paths. Also, the effects of many airport and aircraft pollutants are persistent and bio-

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accumulative—the toxins build up in our bodies and our environment, triggering health and environmental problems later on.

Airports, especially the major ones, cannot pass an honest EIS. Even Chicago O'Hare officials state that in court documents. Airports and major population centers are not compatible.

Despite this compelling evidence, the aviation industry is aggressively promoting bills that will erode environmental protections, take away local control, grant airports environmental immunity, and limit or kill court challenges brought by residents. The intent of these bills is clear: they are aimed at silencing citizens and communities who protest the expansion of airports in an effort to protect their families and neighborhoods.

...And the FAA, in its "Challenger Series" scheme, promotes environmental shortcutting and other anti-environmental, anti-community and anti-human concerns; all to cram a massive amount of aircraft into existing airspace and highly urbanized areas. Those old tactics can only come back to haunt all of us and soon.

Contrary to the interested parties' marketing, adding new runways will NOT relieve the vast majority of the delays that air travelers are experiencing. The real rationale for new construction is to accommodate the massive increases in flights that the FAA and industry seek to promote.

According to internal FAA and NASA documents, flights are predicted to at least double nationally by 2010, in large part because of cargo expansion. MSNBC recently reported, "...many airports have already exceeded projections for 2010." Aviation has been the framework of economic globalization, and well over 2000 airports in the United States are either under expansion or are earmarked for it.

We are already well past acceptable levels of environmental and quality-of-life problems created by airports and aircraft operations. What we now have is a public health threat of pandemic proportions. Regrettably, technological answers to mitigate the significant public health and environmental problems are decades away. The public deserves to know the true dimensions of the problem, so that it can participate in informed decisions about adding more flights. There are better alternatives to airport expansion. In order to immediately reduce delays, we must bring flight volumes to safer and healthier levels by enforcing the high-density rule. We also need to stop the airlines from overscheduling the number of flights that can safely fit into one time slot. We also need to start allotting more than a miniscule fraction of the national budget to the development of high-speed rail, so that we can achieve a world-class system similar to that in Europe. In addition, we should build new airports that are sufficiently removed from high-density population centers. And we must extend the application of demand-management strategies. Finally, we should make greater use of innovative options such as video teleconferencing, which will reduce the need for business travel.

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We concur with the comments of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding the proposed expansion of Boston's Logan Airport: enough is enough, clean up the environmental and public-health mess that exists already, route planes to well-buffered and strictly zoned areas, and make a meaningful investment in other modes of mass transit such as a high-speed rail.

In closing: The aviation industry has made it manifestly clear that our welfare and that of our children are not on its radar screen. We look to the federal government to protect us, not to collude with special corporate interests. There are fundamental principles at stake here. We ask that you do the right thing and adopt pollution prevention principles for airports, such as for example, those proposed in our handout.

As a citizen's group, we have done our homework on these issues. We want to work with you, not only to clean up the existing problems from aviation and to prevent others, but also to work for a better transportation system, which includes viable choices in modes of transportation, and to advance both our public health and our environment as well as our economy.

We need to find better ways of doing things that are in our nation's and our best interest. We are not the enemy; we are your neighbors, family and friends who need your help in protecting our neighborhoods, communities and our globe. Please support our initiatives.

Thank you.

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## ---2001 Region 5 U.S. EPA Federal Facilities Conference---

### US-CAWA FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE: Air Transport Environmental Leadership.

The head of each airport shall be responsible for ensuring that all necessary actions are taken to integrate environmental accountability into airport day-to-day decision-making and long-term planning processes, across all airport missions, activities, and functions. Environmental considerations must be a fundamental and integral component of airport policies, operations, planning, and management. The head of each airport is responsible for meeting these goals and requirements.

### US-CAWA GOALS

1. Environmental Management. Through development and implementation of environmental management systems, airports and airlines shall ensure that strategies are established to support environmental leadership programs, policies, and procedures and that airport and airline senior level managers explicitly and actively endorse these strategies.
2. Environmental Compliance. Airports and airlines shall comply with environmental regulations by establishing and implementing environmental compliance audit programs and policies that emphasize pollution prevention as a means to both achieve and maintain environmental compliance.
3. Right-to-Know and Pollution Prevention. Through active planning and prompt reporting, airport facilities shall be leaders and responsible members of their communities by informing the public and their workers of possible sources of pollution resulting from facility operations. Each airport shall strive to reduce or eliminate harm to human health and the environment from releases of pollutants to the environment. Each airport shall advance the national policy that, whenever feasible and cost-effective, pollution should be prevented or reduced at the source. Regulatory compliance programs shall emphasize pollution prevention as the primary method of compliance with environmental laws and goals.
4. Release Reduction: Toxic Chemicals and Noise. Through innovative pollution prevention and effective facility management and procurement practices, each airport shall annually report and reduce its Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) releases and off-site transfers of toxic chemicals for treatment and disposal by 10 percent annually, and by 40 percent overall by December 31, 2006. Each airport shall annually report and reduce both average and peak noise levels by 3dB and 6dB respectively by December 31, 2006 and by another 3 and 6dB respectively by December 31, 2010, for all locations in the surrounding area.
5. Use Reduction: Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Substances and Other Pollutants. Through identification of less toxic substitutes and facility management practices, including pollution prevention, each airport shall reduce its use and generation of toxic chemicals, radioactive chemicals, and other pollutants by 50 percent by December 31, 2006.
6. Reductions in Ozone-Depleting Substances. Through evaluating present and future uses of ozone-depleting substances and maximizing the purchase and use of cost-effective, environmentally-preferable alternatives, each airport and airline shall develop a plan to phase out the procurement of Class I ozone-depleting substances for all non-excepted uses by December 31, 2010.
7. Environmentally and Economically Beneficial Landscaping. Each airport shall strive to promote the sustainable management of facility lands through the implementation of cost-effective, environmentally-sound landscaping practices and programs to reduce adverse impacts to the natural environment from airport operations.