

## EPA to study, regulate coal ash waste after spill **AP** Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) - The Environmental Protection Agency on Monday launched a review of coal ash storage facilities and said it would draft regulations for coal ash by the end of the year.

In a letter sent to the corporate headquarters of 61 power companies, the agency asks for information about the contents, historic spills and record of inspections at the estimated 300 coal ash storage ponds and landfills nationwide.

**The review comes after a spill at a Tennessee Valley Authority power plant in Kingston, Tenn., flooded more than 300 acres of land and killed fish in nearby rivers.** The information provided by power producers as well as inspections conducted by the EPA will help prevent future threats to human health and the environment, EPA administrator Lisa Jackson said.

"Environmental disasters like the one last December in Kingston should never happen anywhere in the country," said Jackson.

**Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal that can include heavy metals and other toxic contaminants.** The latest Energy Department data shows that 721 power plants nationwide produced 95.8 million tons of coal ash in 2005.

But no federal regulations or standards govern its storage and disposal, even though **the EPA has long recognized coal ash as a risk to human health and the environment** and knows of 67 cases where it is known or suspected of causing water pollution.

Eight years ago, the agency said it wanted to set a national standard for coal ash as it does household trash. **The agency could also regulate coal ash as a hazardous waste,** something it has decided against in the past.

Jim Roewer, executive director of the Utility Solid Waste Activities Group, a consortium of electricity producers that includes many on the EPA's mailing list, said the agency was right to investigate before drafting regulations to address any shortcomings.

"There are some gaps out there, but most states have very good programs," Roewer said, adding that the industry is not against regulation, as long as it does not classify coal ash as hazardous waste.

**Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.,** chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said the effort was **"an important first step toward making sure our families and communities will be protected from toxic coal ash waste in the future."**

Boxer last week proposed a resolution calling on the EPA to regulate coal ash. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, had introduced a bill directing the Interior Department to set uniform design and engineering standards for coal ash ponds at power plants. Rahall said Monday that he would no longer pursue legislation in light of EPA's announcement.

\_ On the Net:

EPA Coal Ash Letter: <http://tiny.cc/coalash>

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