

To:
From:
Date:

Re: Lead emissions from general aviation aircraft

I have recently learned that most of the airplanes flying above our homes and schools are powered by propellers and piston engines. In fact, approximately 70% of GA (general aviation) fleet rely on piston engine technology. ***Are you aware that piston engines run on leaded fuel (avgas). That makes piston engine aircraft one of the primary sources of airborne lead in the United States.***

These are the airports [close to my home] [in state] that are spreading this poison:

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These facilities run on public funds and are subject to local and state health regulations.

In the 1970s, a series of policies removed lead from paint, plumbing, food cans and automotive gasoline. These actions were followed by a significant decline in blood lead levels of children. However, lead remains in aviation gasoline. After decades of pressure, (and following a landmark study of the negative impacts of lead from avgas on children), the EPA is finally expected to issue an Endangerment Finding on leaded avgas this year. But we are a long way from real change.

Alternative fuels (without lead) have been [approved](#) for piston engine aircraft; these fuels are safe and require no modification of engines or aviation infrastructure. The incremental cost of unleaded avgas averages \$0.65 - \$0.80 per gallon (for now, until production ramps up), which is a very small cost imposed only on a relatively small number of mostly affluent users when compared to the widespread and long-lasting public health benefits.

Special interests have taken hold and the conversion to lead free fuels is at least eight years away. Meanwhile, we can expect the spreading of tons of lead over our homes and schools to continue ([estimated](#) at 113,000 tons since 1930).

What are you, as the health authority [in this state/jurisdiction], doing about this threat to our health? What measures are you taking to protect us?

According to NIOSH, *"It doesn't really matter if a person breathes-in, swallows, or absorbs lead particles, the health effects are the same; however, the body absorbs higher levels of lead when it is breathed in."*

There is NO safe level of lead and, once introduced to the environment, it remains there forever. Lead contamination from avgas is especially devastating. As it burns, it breaks down into microfine particles in the air we breathe. It contaminates soils, and we pick it up as we walk around, bringing it into our homes where it remains to be inhaled or swallowed by small children when they crawl or put objects in their mouths. It leaches into the soil where it contaminates crops and water sources.

The communities that your office is responsible for protecting expect you to take action now on this health crisis.

Other communities have begun to recognize this issue and are taking steps to limit harm to the health of the people who live there. Guidance is available from the State of California, who issued a [document](#) called "Standard of Care Guidelines on Childhood Lead Poisoning for California Health Care Providers"

which provides guidance on testing and identifying sources of lead exposure. I respectfully request that the Department of Health would review the available, [up-to-date information](#) on lead exposure to citizens living within its jurisdiction and begin to take active, tangible steps towards addressing this very real health scourge in our community, starting with, at the very least, educating those most likely to be negatively impacted by a health risk of which they are likely unaware.

I would appreciate the courtesy of a reply. My address / email address is _____.

Sincerely,

[your name here]