



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
CITY OF CHICAGO

Petcoke FAQ's

What is Petcoke and where is it coming from?

Petroleum Coke, or “petcoke,” is a solid, carbon material derived as a byproduct of the oil refining process. Petcoke is typically used as a fuel source in power plants.

Why is the City issuing this “call”?

The City is asking the public to call 311 and report sightings of dust that may be coming from one or more petcoke piles. This call is being done to gather more information about this issue, and to inform additional investigations. It is important that all businesses operating in Chicago be responsible corporation citizens, comply with the law and be conscious of residents and their surrounding neighborhoods.

What should I expect after I report a sighting of dust that may appear to be petcoke?

Your complaint will be assigned to an environmental inspector as soon as possible, no later than the following business day. The inspector will investigate the complaint and may call you for more information.

What specific information does the City wish to know?

The City wishes to know the following: 1) where the dust is being observed (e.g., in homes, on the property, on the public way, etc.); 2) what the dust looks like (e.g., color, thickness, etc.) 3) what the wind conditions were like when the dust was observed (e.g., mild, moderate or strong); 4) where the dust was blowing from; and 5) how long the dust has been observed.

What are the health effects associated with this dust?

This dust, like other dust, can act as an irritant and cause watery and itchy eyes and a cough.



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Are there other health effects I should be concerned of?

There are no other known illnesses or health effects associated with petcoke dust. This was the conclusion of a report issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) based on available scientific data. This report and its findings can be accessed at:
http://www.epa.gov/chemrtk/hpvis/hazchar/Category_Petroleum%20Coke_June_2011.pdf

What should I do if I'm experiencing any illness or health issue I believe is attributed to petcoke dust?

If you or a family member are experiencing any illness or health issue you believe is attributed to petcoke dust, we recommend that you bring this to the attention of your physician or other health care provider.

Is there anything I can do to avoid being exposed to petcoke dust?

Limit spending times outdoors or outdoor activities, especially under conditions where more dust is more likely to be present (i.e., dry and windy conditions). Keep windows closed. Clean floors and other surfaces in your home to get rid of dust.

For additional information or to report sighting of petcoke dust, please call 311 or visit www.cityofchicago.org/petcoke.