

# CLEAN AIR: Oregon's new law may not clean the air

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After the 2016 crisis, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality asked more than 1,500 businesses statewide to divulge their annual emissions of 633 toxic chemicals.

Oregon regulators got the information they need to calculate the health risks posed by air pollutants last year.

But department officials haven't analyzed the reports. Lawmakers refused to provide money to translate those numbers into health risks until now. And regulators expect the work to take years.

So we started doing the math for them.

The newsroom used the same formula that the Department of Environmental Quality plans to use in its initial screening to

identify factories that deserve further study.

The Oregonian/OregonLive chose 25 plants that are known to emit large volumes of harmful pollutants; have drawn complaints from neighbors; or were vocal in the debate about the clean air law, Senate Bill 1541.

At most, seven of the 25 would receive additional scrutiny. The number that would have to install new pollution controls or reduce their use of chemicals is likely even lower. State environmental regulators say the analysis shows a worst-case scenario for each facility, a high estimate of risk that will shrink when more sophisticated analyses are conducted.

Several companies said the analysis was too simplistic to determine their actual risk.

"A screening method-

ology is no substitute for a true risk assessment," said Ellen Porter, Roseburg Forest Products' environmental affairs director.

None of the 25 facilities scored higher than Owens-Brockway Glass Container, a bottle plant near the Portland International Airport. Its screening result for cancer risk was 2,916 in a million, well above the state law's benchmark of 50-in-a-million.

The figure represents the number of additional cancer cases expected from breathing the air around a pollution source for a lifetime.

In 2016, state records show, the plant emitted more than 400 pounds of lead, a neurotoxin, 22 pounds of arsenic, a carcinogen, and 213 pounds of chromium. Because the company

didn't specify whether the chromium was harmless or carcinogenic, the state's screening assumes it was all carcinogenic. Excluding chromium, the risk estimate drops to 890 in a million, still among the highest of the 25 facilities in the newsroom analysis.

Gregory Sotir, a teacher who lives nearby, said he was surprised the facility scored so high. He said he has worried for years about the brown and black clouds of smoke he sees coming from the plant. But he hasn't been sure what risk the facility posed.

Sotir said Owens-Brockway had been unwilling to negotiate new pollution controls with the community group he directs, the Cully Air Action Team. Under the state's original clean air plan, Sotir said he

was confident the company would have to reduce its pollution. Now, under the weaker version that passed, he isn't sure.

If the state won't act, Sotir said, grassroots community groups like his will instead. Knowing the plant's risk will be helpful in trying to convince the company to come to the negotiating table, Sotir said.

"If they are one of the leading polluters of toxic metals and carcinogens, we as a community want to know that," he said.

Janet Galecki, a spokeswoman for Owens-Illinois, which owns the plant, said until the clean air law is signed and the state formally adopts risk assessment procedures, "we are unable to conduct a facility assessment."

The results of the

newsroom's analysis make clear how little this year's legislative debate about air pollution was informed by real-world data.

Some businesses benefited by pushing for higher allowable levels of cancer risk. Others protested even though they would have been unaffected.

Legislators and the governor, with prodding from industry lobbyists, moved the allowable level of cancer risk higher and higher. Brown's initial plan allowed factories to create a risk of no more than 10 cancer cases per 1 million people. The next version said 25. Lawmakers approved 50, but also will allow many companies to go to 200.

The state's highest target allows one additional cancer diagnosis in every 5,000 people living near a polluter.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Madison Feller runs along side of her mustang, Leo, without holding his lead rope while training the animal Monday at her home outside of Pendleton.

## MUSTANGS: Program works with BLM and allows teens to tame wild Oregon horses

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She and her parents, Sarah and Patrick Feller, drove the horse to their small ranch just outside of Pendleton. Training was a delicate dance. The teenager had trained horses before, but never one this raw. She absorbed writing and videos by horse trainer Clinton Anderson and put his techniques into practice. Early on in the process, she drove Leo around a round pen to keep him moving in a quest to establish dominance.

"Horses in a herd have a pecking order —whoever moves first is on the losing end," Madison said. "You have to prove you're dominant over them."

Eventually, Leo realized he could trust Madison and the two became inseparable.

"He follows her everywhere," said Sarah.

Madison, who is homeschooled and the oldest of nine siblings, made Leo a priority. Over the next few months of daily training, Leo got comfortable with his human handler.

"He's changed drastically. He went from being spooky, unreliable and reactive to a trusting partner," Madison said. "He's chill with everything now."

Erica Fitzgerald launched Teens and Oregon Mustangs in 2008 after competing in the Extreme Mustang Makeover. Fitzgerald said the reason for starting the teen group was twofold.

First, she hoped to give young aspiring horse trainers the same boost she got training her first mustang.

"I figured out that if I would have learned as a teenager what this horse taught me in my 30s, I would be so much farther ahead," Fitzgerald said. "These horses are untainted and virtually untouched by humans. You learn a lot from wild horses. I wanted to take that to the kids."

Fitzgerald's other reason for starting the program is the glut of wild horses in this country. She said the Bureau of Land Management, which manages wild horses and burros, periodically removes excess animals for the health of the land and the herds. Under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, excess horses are stockpiled in holding areas or are adopted out. Slaughtering the animals is not legal.

"There are thousands of them rotting in corrals in

containment centers," she said.

According to the BLM, Oregon had about 4,300 free-roaming horses (as of a year ago). Nationwide, more than 72,000 roam on BLM-managed rangeland and currently about 45,000 are held in off-range facilities.

She doesn't blame the BLM for this. The law is clear and the agency is doing the best it can in a difficult situation, she said. Every wild horse trained is one less horse in a holding corral.

"It's a win, win, win," she said. "What it all boils down to is getting horses homes."

During the auction on March 25, members of the public can bid on the horses trained by the kids. Minimum bid is \$100, which covers the government fee to get title and have a veterinarian inspect the horse. In past years, winning bids ranged from \$165 to \$7,200. Since the group started, 356 wild horses have been trained and adopted out.

Earlier this week, Madison ran Leo through his paces in the Fellers' corral. The horse stepped easily onto a pair of railroad ties at Madison's command. He walked backwards at the gentlest of nudges. The pair communicates subtly without much talk or pulling on the rope.

During the competition that starts Thursday, Madison will guide Leo through a course that includes such obstacles as bridges, gates and ramps. The competition will also include showmanship and body conditioning divisions. Sarah said her daughter took the challenge seriously.

"You can't have a day off," she said. "You can't veg out on the couch. You have to put on your boots and hit the barn. It takes blood, sweat and tears."

Leo did his part, too. They prayed for the right horse, Sarah said, and got him.

Madison and the other young trainers may purchase their horses for \$25 or auction them off and keep the money (minus \$100). Madison, who plans to formally adopt her mustang, marvels at what she has learned from Leo. She gives her horse most of the credit.

"He's so smart," she said. "He figured it out really fast."

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

More than 100 homes are slated to be built at the Sunset View Estates off of Southwest Hailey Avenue and 30th Street pending approval by the Pendleton Planning Commission.

## HOUSING: Developer says Pendleton housing conference sparked his interest

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to break double digits in the number of housing units developed per year, the city's housing market is showing signs of robust growth.

The city issued more than 50 housing permits in 2017, aided by another 2018 housing project northeast of

28th Drive.

That's where Nate Brusselback, a Portland developer who owns three Pendleton apartment complexes, plans to build a set of duplexes that span 25 units. The 1,262-square-foot units with two or three bedrooms are expected to be completed in the summer or

fall.

Other existing projects are in the midst of further development.

Newberg developer Saj Jivanjee is working on the first 20 apartments of an eventual 100-unit expansion of the Pendleton Heights subdivision. Further up Tutuilla Road, local devel-

oper Dusty Pace purchased multiple lots from the city last year with the intention of building up to 45 new three-bedroom homes at Sunridge Estates over the next several years.

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