



Petrochemical fire in Houston reveals much larger issue.

SITUATION

On Sunday, March 17, tanks of toluene and xylene caught fire at Intercontinental Terminal in the Houston, TX area, releasing plumes of black smoke into the air. As a result, incomplete combustion of toluene and xylene combined to form benzene, a known carcinogen.

FACTS

Toluene and xylene are toxic aromatic chemicals added to gasoline to boost octane. The Environmental Protection Agency classifies these chemicals as hazardous air pollutants, even though they make up 25% of gasoline.



While you could see the cloud of smoke hovering over parts of Houston, this process of incomplete combustion happens every day in the 263 million automobiles across the United States. You just can't see it. Due to gasoline's incomplete combustion, toxins escape through the tailpipe into the atmosphere as ultra-fine particulates (UFP's). UFP's are smaller than the diameter of a human hair and once released remain in the atmosphere. Moreover, they are smaller than the EPA's mandated size of particulate matter allowed in our air.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Since UFP's are so small, our body's natural defenses can't filter them out; instead, they pass through our lungs and directly enter our bloodstream. These UFP's potentially cause health issues. The fire in Texas is a disaster, but the Urban Air Initiative (UAI) hopes it serves as an opportunity to start a discussion about the need to reduce toxic aromatics in gasoline and protect public health.

OUR FOCUS

For years, UAI has been working to raise awareness on the need to reduce toxic aromatics in gasoline because cleaner options exist, such as biofuels like ethanol.

Find more info:
fixourfuel.com
