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News Release  
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***O'HARE POLLUTION-CAUSES CANCER***

For Immediate Release

Is there a correlation between increased cancer reports and the area surrounding O'Hare Airport or not? AReCO (Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare) says there is, and that the situation is already spiraling out of control!

According to O'Hare's own data, it already produces more than 18% of known industrial carcinogens in Cook County (pop. 5.4 million); Cook is the second largest producer in the nation. That is enormous! It should come as no surprise; we already suffer from some of the highest cancer and respiratory rates in the nation.

Whereas past studies focused on analyzing probable cancer risk rates to area residents, as projected from the presence of airport pollutants, they did not actually analyze what the current cancer situation is today. Though they have a forward-looking advantage, such study projections can be misleadingly low, because only a few of the thousands of possibly carcinogenic chemicals have been researched to the extent necessary for pollution analysis projection use. Furthermore, the impact of combining chemical pollutants in the environment, or combining pollutants with lifestyle factors (e.g. diet) or coincident disease (e.g. colds, viruses, etc.) has not been adequately studied to allow use in such projections.

AReCO decided instead to take a hard look at the Illinois Cancer Registry reported data of area cancer incidence rates to determine what the situation actually is now. The results, based on 1994-1998 rates, are contained in their report "INVESTIGATION OF THE CANCER INCIDENCE RATES IN THE VICINITY OF O'HARE AIRPORT", 3/19/02. The results were released today at a press conference in the State of Illinois building.

The first conclusion is that, not unexpectedly, overall cancer incidence rates in the area are 28% higher than the already high state average, in part, because of O'Hare. More importantly, breaking down the incidence rates by zip code in a 10-mile area around O'Hare Airport clearly demonstrates a prevalence of incidence rate "hot-spots" to the northeast of the airport, 33-50% higher than those of the overall local area and 50-100% higher than the state average.

The concentration of these hot-spot areas to the northeast of O'Hare Airport supports a correlation to chemical and particulate pollution blown into the area from the airport and aircraft by prevailing winds. Additionally, temperature inversions over the lake and westerly lake breezes can trap pollutants in this region, further increasing the negative impact to these northeast suburbs and

“backing it up” into the general airport-surrounding area. This “back up” effect, accompanied by ground contamination from rainfall and other effects, all stand as probable transport mechanisms, moving airport toxins to the environs of area residents, particularly children and young adults engaged in outdoor activities.

The results and conclusions of the study point to O'Hare Airport as the prime pollution contamination generator, central to the cancer issue and quite possibly others as well. Examples of these are asthma and coronary artery disease, making it abundantly clear that substantial and expeditious O'Hare Airport pollution reductions are mandatory, if the residents and especially children in these surrounding areas are to be spared an upward spiral to the already high cancer incidences.

AReCO also presented evidence from a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cancer study of Chicago's Midway Airport, documenting that it is the aircraft engines, and not the cars and trucks, that are problematic to public health. The AReCO-O'Hare cancer study concludes that a reduction of aircraft emissions (principally carcinogens) of perhaps 50 times less is urgently needed to prevent future medical crises.

As a first step, AReCO calls upon the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) to immediately launch studies to identify all of the constituents and levels of O'Hare pollution, to set targets and time limits for reductions to acceptable, regulated levels, and to vigorously enforce airport failures to meet these mandatory requirements. AReCO also recommends that the US-EPA simultaneously begin objective, focused studies of the pollution concentrations in the hot-spot areas (particularly in the summer months when “trapping” effects would be more prevalent).

Finally, AReCO calls upon the President to direct the EPA, with NAS (National Academy of Sciences) oversight, to establish both appropriate aircraft emission and O'Hare Airport operational emissions requirements that, in combined effect, will meet these newly-set EPA requirements. AReCO calls upon Congress to mandate that such steps be expeditiously and correctly implemented. It is important for Congress to act in the residents' and airport workers' best interest, since with any major problem such as this, it is the taxpayer who bears the ultimate costs.