

# MAJOR ELECTRIC UTILITIES IN FEDERAL COURT FOR AIR POLLUTION VIOLATIONS

Corporate owners of dirty coal plant face hundreds of millions in potential fines and upgrades  
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**COLSTRIP, MT**—Corporate owners of one of the largest and most polluting coal plants in the nation, Colstrip Generating Facility located in Montana, landed in federal court today for what the Sierra Club and the Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) call egregious violations of the federal Clean Air Act.

The owners facing federal violations include high-profile companies like Warren Buffett's PacifiCorp, Washington-based Puget Sound Energy (PSE), and Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPL). Avista Utilities, Portland General Electric, and NorthWestern Energy also have ownership in the Colstrip plant, and are named in the suit.

Sierra Club and MEIC are seeking a court order requiring the Colstrip owners to install long overdue modern pollution controls on the outdated Montana plant and pay as much as \$37,500 per day for violations. Dozens of claims in the lawsuit point to continued operation of Colstrip after illegal alterations made without modernizing pollution controls, a requirement meant to ensure older coal plants do not have an unfair advantage over newer plants with state-of-the-art pollution controls.

"Today's legal action is the latest in our nationwide campaign targeting owners of the nation's aging coal fleet who continue to skirt their legal obligations. It's our national priority at the Sierra Club to uphold the health and environmental safeguards promised by the Clean Air Act for more than three decades," said Bruce Nilles, national director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign. "When coal-owning utilities can no longer dump their pollution on unsuspecting customers for free, they realize sticking with coal is a gamble they can't afford to risk."

Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign points to many successes in protecting climate and public health from the dangers of carbon pollution. With 142 coal plants now slated for retirement and 60,000 megawatts of wind production now on line, the campaign continues to hold big polluters accountable while working with utilities to transition to a sustainable energy future.

"Across America utilities are transitioning from coal to clean energy, yet the Colstrip owners shovel customers' money into a Montana coal plant that is one of the largest polluters in the U.S.," said Nilles. "The Colstrip coal plant is a liability not just for the owners and their boards, but also for the families who will be asked to foot the bill to keep a dying plant on life support."

The Colstrip coal plant is plagued with numerous other environmental hazards and violations including haze pollution, toxic coal ash waste ponds, and water pollution from the strip mine that provides coal to the plant.

"Big corporations like Puget Sound Energy and Pennsylvania Power and Light might think their coal pollution problems are out of sight, but they're certainly not out of mind. In Montana, we suffer the firsthand consequences of having the toxic Colstrip within our borders," said Anne Hedges from MEIC. "That's why families from Washington to Montana are coming together to demand something better. We all deserve a sustainable and healthy energy future, but we can only get there by replacing coal with clean energy."

Pollution control upgrades to meet modern standards can potentially cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Even with large investments in modern controls for the named pollutants, the coal plant would still emit millions of tons of climate pollution, equivalent to three million cars a year.

Visit [CoalFreePSE.org](http://CoalFreePSE.org) for more information.

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