

TOPIC: COAL ASH

Overview

After coal is burned for electricity, there is ash left over. Coal contains traces of heavy metals that are more concentrated in the ash after the carbon is burned off. Indiana produces nearly 7 million tons of coal ash per year. The ash is disposed of in 86 impoundments and 13 landfills next to the power plants, which are located along the Kankakee, White, Wabash, and Ohio rivers and next to Lake Michigan. All but three of Indiana's power plants have coal ash disposal in the 100-year floodplain. Most of the impoundments are unlined. Coal ash is in the floodplain and unlined because it was exempt from waste handling regulation until 2015. In 2018 the EPA weakened the 2015 rules. Indiana began the process of writing its own coal ash disposal rules in 2017.

Impacts on Our Water

- Groundwater contamination at coal ash disposal sites documented
- Some private wells impacted
- Water from ash impoundments discharged into rivers
- Risk of catastrophic ash spills into rivers

More Information

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Coal ash spilled into the Dan River, North Carolina, 2014



Coal ash impoundments at Harding Street power plant, Indianapolis