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air and water news

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LEAD IN AIR HAZARDOUS TO CHILDREN, NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL SAYS

The National Research Council, in a report to be released this week, concludes that atmospheric lead in urban areas could pose a health hazard to children and certain classes of workers, but not to the general population. Viewed in the same light as the Environmental Protection Agency criteria documents for such pollutants as sulfur dioxide (AWN, May 3, p. 1), the report seems to give a strong impetus for restricting gasoline lead for health reasons. The research was done by the council's committee on biologic effects of atmospheric pollutants.

The report concludes that young children in inner cities have greater amounts of lead in their blood than adults and that this may be from eating soil or dust contaminated by airborne lead, as well as breathing the polluted air and possibly eating lead-based paints. The lead concentrations are sufficient to cause biochemical changes, but not sufficient to cause lead poisoning symptoms, the report says. There also is a potential danger for some traffic policemen, garage men and others whose work exposes them to high lead levels, the council report says.

The report *Airborne Lead in Perspective* is available in advance typescript copies for \$15 from the printing and publishing office, National Academy of Sciences, 2102 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418. The printed version will be available in a few months at lower cost.

FEDERAL JUDGE JEOPARDIZES STRENGTH OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

A federal judge with a record of opposition to conservationists last week came out with an interpretation which, if left unchallenged, could undermine the effect of the environmental impact statements. Federal District Judge George L. Hart of Washington, D.C., said in court that his job was not to rule on the adequacy of the impact statements--it was only to note that they were submitted, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The case in point: eight environmental groups filed suit to stop the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department from conducting a nuclear warhead test this fall in Alaska. Judge Hart dismissed the suit in a brief statement that did not mention the environmental impact statement. But David Sive, attorney for the environmental groups,

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