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**AHEAD OF GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT, A NEW REPORT**  
**ASSESSES HEALTH IMPACTS OF AN AGING COAL PLANT**  
***Community helped shape assessment of the Shawnee Fossil Plant near Paducah, KY***

PADUCAH—The Kentucky Environmental Foundation has completed a study examining how retiring or retrofitting the aging, coal-fired Shawnee Fossil Plant could impact health in Kentucky communities. KEF's study found that shuttering the plant could help reduce disease often caused by the plant's harmful emissions, but that its full retirement could have other negative health consequences associated with the loss of employment opportunities and tax revenues. The health impact assessment (HIA) that KEF conducted provides recommendations for mitigating the health impacts of either retiring or retrofitting the plant.

KEF is releasing the study ahead of Governor Beshear's Conference on Energy and the Environment, and encourages state leaders to use the HIA in order to put health at the forefront of Kentucky's energy discussion. "The conversation around energy and health is tough in Kentucky," said Deborah Payne, MPH, Health Coordinator for the Kentucky Environmental Foundation. "Both economic and environmental factors can impact health. HIAs can be used to address such challenging issues in a manner that engages stakeholders with a wide range of perspectives."

HIA is an evaluation tool that is becoming increasingly popular in the United States for its ability to help identify and address the likely health benefits and risks of a decision made in a field outside the health sector. The Shawnee Fossil Plant HIA looked at how a coal plant's retrofit (adding pollution controls and other changes or upgrades) would impact the health of community members. Stakeholders from across the community were encouraged to participate in the process, including business leaders, health professionals and health-affected citizens. TVA provided comments on drafts of the HIA as well as opened the doors of the plant for a tour for the HIA advisory committee.

An advisory committee comprised of community stakeholders assisted in the development of the HIA's recommendations. The recommendations were then ranked according to what actions are most feasible and might have the most impact on community health. One recommendation for a retirement scenario included ensuring that TVA provide community leaders sufficient time to plan for economic transition. A recommendation included in a retrofit scenario involved setting up routine observance of the Air Quality Index ([www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov)) by the local schools to monitor for poor air quality days.

“Our community will be impacted in the future by the tough decisions our elected officials, the EPA, and TVA are facing around both the environment and our economy,” said Kent Koster, Director of the Purchase District Health Department. “This HIA can serve as a platform to start a conversation on those concerns.” The Health Department conducted a community survey, involving listening circles, to prepare a “Community Health Assessment” that assisted in identifying concerns about individual and community health issues.

“Health should be a priority in every decision our community and economic leaders consider,” shared HIA advisory committee member, Shirley Lanier. “The Shawnee Fossil Plant HIA works to look at the big picture, blurring the barriers between health and industry.”

The Kentucky Environmental Foundation's Health Impact Assessment is a timely study. Many of Kentucky’s coal-fired power plants will soon face tough decisions as they attempt to comply with both MATS and forthcoming carbon emissions (111d) regulations. The HIA report acknowledged that even *with* regulations, coal-fired power plants continue to produce by-products that affect health. Therefore, this study is an important tool that could help city officials and power companies to consider health as they begin to weigh their options for sources of energy. The report will be presented to TVA, elected officials and impacted community members within the coming month.

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The Kentucky Environmental Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Berea that promotes environmental health and sustainability. It has used alternatives assessment and community dialogue to identify and promote safe solutions to chemical weapons disposal in central Kentucky, and explores the connection between environmental contamination and illnesses that Kentuckians experience. The Purchase District Health Department is a public health agency whose goal is to provide health services to local citizens and promote behaviors that will lead to healthy, productive lives.

The HIA was made possible by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts dedicated to promoting the use of health impact assessments in the United States. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Health Impact Project, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or The Pew Charitable Trusts. More information, including a searchable map of HIA activity in the United States, is available at <http://www.healthimpactproject.org>.