PSEG Agrees to Cut Hours at New Haven Plants

by Norbert Kovacs

Organization: Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

PSEG Agrees to Cut Hours at New Haven Plants

In the first major agreement secured through Connecticut's new environmental justice law, PSEG has consented to reduce hours of operation at its current power plants in New Haven and to create a $500,000 fund to reduce local pollution in neighborhoods impacted by its plants.

PSEG will soon cut the minimum hours its New Haven power plant operates from 14 hours per day to 12 hours. The minimum hours is the time the plant needs to run before it can reach peak efficiency. The plant will reach the goal for minimum hours by co-firing with natural gas and oil on the highest demand days. These are the same days that result in the highest pollution from the plant and present the most risks to sensitive, vulnerable populations nearby.

PSEG also has agreed to reduce the maximum number of hours its current plants in New Haven will operate on peak demand days and to run potential New Haven peaking plants on natural gas, the cleanest fossil fuel available. PSEG's older facilities all have run on low sulfur 6, the dirtiest oil that can be burned.

Besides all the facility changes, PSEG has consented to establish a $500,000 fund to reduce air pollution in neighborhoods near its New Haven power plants. According to CCEJ, the nonprofit that spearheaded negotiations with the company, the fund could be used to provide retrofits to city garbage trucks or clean ventilation ducts that present asthma triggers in public schools.

PSEG reached the agreement on its plants and the community fund so that CT Coalition for Environmental Justice and its allies would not oppose the company’s request for permits to build its new peaking units in the city. The company will issue its ultimate decision outlining the changes it has agreed to by the end of January 2010.

The PSEG agreement is the first settlement reached under Connecticut’s new environmental justice law. Community people that worked with CCEJ to achieve the agreement said they were pleased with the early public notice PSEG made of its request for a new peaking plant permit. The move allowed for ample public discussion about the potential plant and community benefits that could come in
return for agreeing to the new plant.