

## **Kingston Ash Pond Release: Public Health Q & A**

### **What is coal fly ash?**

Coal fly ash (or coal ash) is a grey, powdery, mineral-like material that remains when coal is burned. Coal fly ash is sometimes used to make concrete and as a fill material in highway construction. The material released from the pond also contains silica (primary component in sand) in amounts greater than 1%. Many common materials contain silica, including concrete and soil.

### **Are there toxic metals in fly ash?**

Yes, in small concentrations. The metals in fly ash generally will not dissolve in water or go through your skin by touching it.

### **What are the health effects of coal fly ash?**

For health effects to occur, coal ash must get inside one's body. Contact with wet coal fly ash does not present a serious health risk. Direct skin contact may cause localized irritation.

Breathing small amounts of fly ash for a short period of time is unlikely to be a health concern. Breathing particulates (fly ash or other airborne particulates) over long periods of time can irritate the respiratory system. People with existing lung diseases such as bronchitis, emphysema, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) should avoid breathing coal fly ash dust.

### **How can a person be exposed to coal fly ash?**

People may be exposed to coal fly ash by handling it or by breathing the dry dust.

### **How can I avoid being exposed to coal fly ash?**

TVA is in the process of cleaning up released coal fly ash in the Swan Pond Road vicinity with state and federal oversight. You should

1. Avoid direct contact with the coal fly ash;
2. avoid walking through the coal fly ash, or handling or disturbing dry coal fly ash to prevent causing the dry ash to become airborne;
3. avoid breathing large amounts of dry dust; and
4. limit pets' contact with the coal fly ash to avoid bringing it into your home.

### **What should I do if I get coal fly ash on me or my clothes?**

If you come in contact with coal fly ash, use soap and water to remove the ash from the skin or clothes. If the ash gets in your eyes, flush your eyes with water.

***In preparing this TVA has consulted with Tennessee Department of Health and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.***