

New investigation: U.S. manufacturing facility released a potent climate pollutant equivalent to 1 billion pounds of CO2

Daikin America facilities in Alabama are a major source of toxic PFAS pollution and ozone-depleting chemicals.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- A new [investigative report](#), released today by Toxic-Free Future, reveals for the first time that a U.S. chemical

manufacturing facility released a

potent climate pollutant equivalent to one billion pounds of carbon dioxide in one year. Daikin America facilities in Alabama are a major source of toxic PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) pollution and releases of ozone-depleting chemicals that contribute to health problems and climate change. Scientists and health advocates are calling for phase-out of PFAS

“forever chemicals” to protect communities and address the climate crisis.

“

...Toxic chemicals and climate change are connected: manufacturing PFAS chemicals not only pollutes people and the environment, but releases potent greenhouse gases, adding to the climate crisis.”

Erika Schreder, Toxic-Free Future

“This is a sad but clear example of how toxic chemicals and climate change are connected: manufacturing PFAS chemicals not only pollutes people and the environment, but releases potent greenhouse gases, adding to the climate crisis,” explains Erika Schreder, co-author of the report and science director for Toxic-Free Future.

“Exposure to PFAS is known to be toxic and dangerous, and so is the process of making them. The safest thing we can do is to stop making them, and we need action at all levels to make this happen, including from Congress, grocery and

fast-food retailers, and state governments.”

The report, Path of Toxic Pollution: How making “forever chemicals” for food packaging threaten people and the climate, finds that Daikin America’s Alabama facilities are the only U.S.



manufacturer of PFAS chemicals for food packaging and are the nation's #2 polluter of HCFC-22. Daikin releases the potent greenhouse gas during the process of manufacturing PFAS. HCFC-22 has been the subject of global restrictions because it damages the atmosphere by depleting the ozone layer, which protects against harmful solar radiation that may cause skin cancer and cataracts, and is a potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential estimated at 5,280 times that of carbon dioxide. Daikin America reported releasing a total of 240,584 pounds of HCFC-22 from its Decatur, Alabama operations in 2019—the greenhouse gas equivalent of more than one billion pounds of carbon dioxide. On an annual basis, these releases constitute the greenhouse gas equivalent of driving 125,000 passenger cars for a year.

“This report illustrates the connection between toxic pollution and the climate crisis, both of which disproportionately harm communities of color,” said Peggy Shepard, Co-Founder and Executive Director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. “Not only is Daikin America endangering people with the PFAS chemicals it sells for food packaging, which is why we helped pass a law banning it for that use in New York State, but we now know that the production of this toxic chemical is accelerating the climate crisis. The entire world is scrambling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions before their damage to our climate is beyond repair, yet we are letting a company dump hundreds of thousands of pounds of hydrochlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere so that it can produce ‘forever chemicals’ that poison our communities? Where is the justice in that?”

HCFC-22 emissions are banned worldwide through the Montreal Protocol, a global treaty, but permitted through a loophole that allows companies like Daikin America to manufacture it as an intermediate in producing another chemical—in this case, toxic PFAS “forever chemicals.”

The report details the path of toxic pollution that results when making and using PFAS-treated packaging for fast food, starting with Daikin's facilities. Daikin's chemicals pose a threat to human health and the environment throughout the process, from production and manufacturing to use and disposal.

“Members of my community have been drinking poisoned water for decades because of plants like the local Daikin America facilities,” says Brenda Hampton, founder of Concerned Citizens of WMEL Water Authority. “And many of my neighbors are experiencing health problems that we're concerned may be due to this toxic PFAS exposure. As a grandmother, this worries me to no end. No one's drinking water should be poisoned to make burger wrappers.”

From dangerous exposures within its facilities to the greater Decatur community and beyond, the path of toxic pollution from Daikin America is broad. Paper mills across the country use Daikin's PFAS treatment to create oil- and grease-resistant paper, often used for fast-food sandwiches.

A major use of greaseproof paper is to hold fast-food sandwiches, including the millions of Whoppers and Big Macs served each day. Based on Daikin's submittals to the FDA, the report

estimates about 21,900 pounds of PFAS treatment have been used for Burger King's Whopper wrappers each year, and 24,700 pounds in McDonald's Big Mac packaging each year.

"Retailers are playing an incredibly important role in moving the marketplace away from these toxic 'forever chemicals,'" explains Mike Schade, director of Mind the Store, a program of Toxic-Free Future. "With many thousands of pounds of PFAS in circulation due to their use in food packaging, we applaud those companies that commit to phasing out these toxics in food packaging. Both Wendy's and McDonald's have made this commitment earlier this year, but Burger King has failed to act. Burger King needs to step up and act immediately to protect its customers and our communities from these 'forever chemicals.'" Toxic-Free Future and its Mind the Store program created a [petition to Burger King](#) and its parent company, Restaurant Brands International, urging them to stop making toxic trash by banning PFAS in its food packaging.

The report also finds that Daikin's process for making PFAS threatens workers' lives: at least three workers have been killed on the job in Decatur. The drinking water for communities downstream of Daikin's facilities has been contaminated by Daikin and another facility, with Daikin paying \$5 million to the local water utility to address the contamination. U.S. EPA data shows that the community within three miles of the Daikin facility is majority African American. And when paper mills apply Daikin's PFAS treatment to paper, they can release PFAS in wastewater, contaminating rivers and sludge.

Read the full report here: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/daikin-path-of-toxic-pollution/>

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