



For Immediate Release

**JUDGE ORDERS MEASURES TO PROTECT
PUBLIC HEALTH IN LA OROYA, PERU**
American-Owned Smelter Has Poisoned Nearly Everyone

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Lima, Peru, April 14, 2005— A Lima civil court has ordered the Peruvian Ministry of Health and the General Directorate for Environmental Health to take steps to alleviate a public health crisis in La Oroya, a city where the Doe Run company of Missouri operates a multi-metal smelter.

La Oroya is a city of 30,000 located high in the Peruvian Andes. The smelter operated by Doe Run emits large amounts of toxic heavy metals and sulfur dioxide into the environs of the city. The contamination is so severe that a recent study by the company and health authorities showed that 99.9 percent of the children in the neighborhood closest to the smelter had blood lead levels that exceed acceptable levels. This study did not examine the blood lead levels of children more than six years old, nor did it evaluate residents of the other neighborhoods in the city, all of which are also highly contaminated.

The court's decision resolves a lawsuit filed by the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA). The ruling, issued after more than two years of litigation, declares that government authorities have failed to comply with the National General Health Law, the National Air and Environmental Quality Standards, and a Supreme Decree regarding declaring States of Emergency in cases of contamination.

According to the Judge, there is no doubt that in La Oroya, "air contamination far surpasses permissible levels," including substantially exceeding the recommendations by the World Health Organization.

"This decision confirms the urgent need to implement measures to protect the health and lives of the people in La Oroya that are affected by the smelter" said Carlos Chirinos, the attorney at the SPDA handling the case. "We will closely monitor compliance with the court order, to ensure improvements in the quality of life and health for the populace, and the economic benefits that this will bring to the region," he added.

The ruling also orders the health agencies to develop and implement a plan to address the State of Emergency. This includes immediate measures to reduce contamination to levels where air quality protects public health. Additionally, the authorities must design and implement a public health strategy to protect vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, infants, and the elderly, and to better define the public health risks faced by the city. Finally, the judge ordered the authorities to undertake epidemiological and environmental monitoring programs in La Oroya.

"The court's decision comes at a key moment for La Oroya, and leaves no question as to the failure of the government to protect the fundamental rights of La Oroya citizens," said Anna

Cederstav, a scientist who works with Earthjustice and AIDA. “Now, our efforts must focus on the implementation of appropriate measures to reverse the public health crisis in the city and nearby communities.”

Although the health authorities recently announced a medical intervention program to treat the most severely poisoned children in the La Oroya Antigua neighborhood, the proposed program fails to consider harms suffered by the many thousands of other children and adults in the city. It also does not contemplate health impacts caused by other toxic contaminants, including arsenic, cadmium, and sulfur dioxide, all of which are present at high levels.

For more information please see <http://www.aida-americas.org> and <http://www.spda.org.pe>