

Filthy Five: ERCO Worldwide Port Edwards, Wisconsin Plant

ERCO Worldwide operates one of the five remaining chlor-alkali facilities in the United States that still has not committed to stop using mercury-cell technology. The plant releases over 1,100 pounds of mercury pollution each year into the environment. While the company is owned by Superior Plus Income Fund, based in Calgary, Canada, ERCO itself is based in Toronto and this plant is located in Port Edwards, Wis. Because of its record, Oceana has dubbed ERCO's Wisconsin plant one of the Filthy Five.

Key Statistics on ERCO Worldwide, Port Edwards, Wisconsin

- The ERCO plant readily admits it is the largest source of mercury pollution in Wisconsin.
- In 2005, the plant reported emitting 1,118 pounds of mercury into the air, which is more than a quarter of Wisconsin's mercury air pollution.
- It will cost the plant an estimated \$5 million to comply with new air requirements; the new requirements only mandate ERCO to reduce mercury emissions by 30 to 40 pounds per year, which means the plant will most likely remain the largest mercury polluter in the state.
- It would cost ERCO \$85 million to convert to mercury-free technology, according to its own feasibility study. Its board of directors has not yet approved the conversion, in part because it was hoping for a special rate on electricity which it did not receive. However it is still under consideration according to the company.

Benefits of Switching

- Although the cost of converting to mercury-free technology runs in the millions, analysis shows that the majority of these costs would be recouped within five years due to energy savings, increased capacity and eliminating millions of dollars in fines, upgrades and cleanups.
- Based on comparisons with companies that have switched, as well as ERCO's own analysis, the company would achieve considerable financial benefits.
- ERCO would increase energy efficiency by 25 to 30 percent, saving enough energy to power more than 6,300 average-sized American homes; this could lead to nearly \$20 million in energy savings over five years.
- ERCO could increase plant capacity by 25 percent, which could increase sales by nearly \$83.2 million over five years.
- ERCO could earn \$4.9 million in extra profits from increased sales due to saved electricity costs.
- Being a responsible corporate citizen would benefit the company's finances, while at the same time safeguarding the health of its employees, the public and the environment.

Cost to Switch:	\$ 85 million
Costs of Using Mercury	\$ 5 million
Benefits (Over 5 years)	
Energy Savings	\$ 19.8 million
Waste Disposal	\$ 2 to 3.3 million
Monitoring	\$ 2 million
Wastewater Treatment	\$ 1.2 to 1.8 million
Capacity Increase (Over 5 years)	
Sales	\$ 83.2 million
Energy Savings	\$ 4.9 million

The four other chlorine plants that have not committed to going mercury-free are Ashta Chemicals in Ashtabula, Ohio; Olin Corporation's plants in Charleston, Tenn., and Augusta, Ga.; and PPG Industries in Natrium, W.Va..