

Polluter pays

POLLUTION knows no borders and neither does its health toll – a rationale that could make new US regulations financially sound. The Environmental Protection

"The new cross-state air pollution rule could save the US \$120 to \$280 billion per year by 2014"

Agency (EPA) announced the cross-state air pollution rule last week. It regulates emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from power plants, which can travel hundreds of miles.

The Republican governor of Texas, Rick Perry, has called the EPA's decision "another example of heavy-handed and misguided action from Washington DC, that threatens Texas jobs and families and puts at risk the reliable and affordable electricity our state needs to succeed". He isn't alone in his opposition. New bits of kit like air scrubbers for power plants will cost \$800 million per year.

But an EPA analysis says the rules will annually prevent 468,000 premature deaths, nonfatal heart attacks and cases of asthma and acute bronchitis – estimates which a spokesperson for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told *New Scientist* were "based on sound science". Overall, the health gains should save \$120 to \$280 billion per year by 2014.



Gone but not forgotten

Hacked off

PHONE hacking could be just the tip of the iceberg.

Last week, British publisher News International (NI) tried to draw a line under the scandal that has engulfed it by closing the 168-year-old tabloid *News of the World*. The closure was announced after it emerged that the newspaper's journalists had used default passwords to eavesdrop on – and sometimes delete – voicemails on an abducted teenager's cellphone.

"Corrupt police officers tracked people's cellphone locations on request for around £300"

But the scandal may encompass other forms of technology, too. On 8 July, *The Guardian* newspaper said the police investigation has been hampered by one NI executive deleting millions of potentially incriminating emails from an internal archive. It may not help: a corporate IT specialist contacted by *New Scientist* says it is highly probable that NI has off-site backup storage of its data for disaster recovery reasons.

And on 11 July *The New York Times* said *News of the World* staff had bribed police to track people's cellphone locations. This must be authorised by a senior police officer under English law, but

the NYT says corrupt officers did the job – dubbed "pinging" – on request for around £300.

Finally, two formerly anonymous sex bloggers, Brooke Magnanti and Zoe Margolis, claim they may have been the victims of spyware attached to emails from NI's *Sunday Times*. They believe this may have helped the paper expose their true identities.

Sexual superbug

AN UNTREATABLE strain of the sexually transmitted disease gonorrhoea, resistant to all existing antibiotics, has been identified in Japan.

The news follows warnings last week from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that it is only a matter of time before invincible strains of *Neisseria gonorrhoea* emerge in the US.

The Japanese superbug, called Ho41, was isolated by Magnus Unemo at the Örebro University Hospital in Sweden, and reported this week at the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Disease Research meeting in Quebec, Canada.

Unemo, who found the bug in strains from Kyoto, says that it could go global in 10 to 20 years.

The CDC reports that some gonorrhoea strains in the US can now only be killed with one class of antibiotics – the cephalosporins.

Hello to the last dino...

The latest non-avian dinosaur fossil known to exist has been found in Montana. A Ceratopsian related to the famous *Triceratops*, it's the first dinosaur to be found within 3 metres of the boundary marking the end of the dinosaur era (*Biology Letters*, DOI: 10.1098/rsbl.2011.0470).

... and goodbye species

A review comparing predictions of extinction rates and observed population declines in response to climate change has found that the predictions are generally accurate. The authors say it confirms we are in a period of global mass extinction, and 1 in 10 species could disappear by 2100 (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1017352108).

Mouldy chips

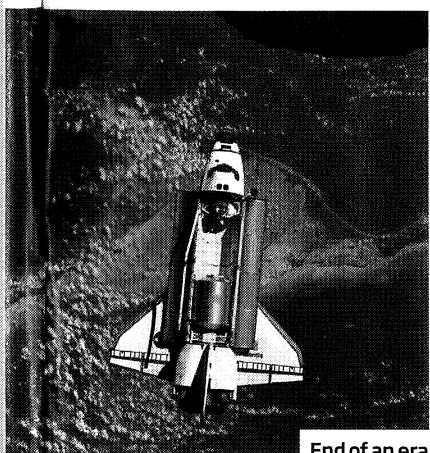
Fungal moulds have invaded electronic databases of the human genome, as well as commercially available silicon chips supposedly containing human genes alone. Bill Langdon of University College London found that at least two genes listed as human in the GenBank genetic database are from moulds and suspects there may be more.

Radioactive cows

Japanese consumers may have been sold beef farmed near the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant that contained six times the legal level of radioactive caesium. Meanwhile, it has also emerged that the Tokyo Electric Power Company, owners of the plant, razed a 35-metre hill to build it on low ground. The decision saved money but left the plant vulnerable to tsunamis.

Fine for Einstein notes

A California family has been ordered to pay \$750,000 for starting a 2007 wildfire that destroyed some of Einstein's notes. Paper plates left to burn in a barrel ignited the blaze, which consumed papers left to the son of one of Einstein's colleagues.



End of an era