

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



BUILT ON A SOLID LEGAL AND SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION

On August 3, President Obama and EPA announced the Clean Power Plan – a historic and important step in reducing carbon pollution from power plants that takes real action on climate change. Shaped by years of unprecedented outreach and public engagement, the final Clean Power Plan is fair, flexible and designed to strengthen the fast-growing trend toward cleaner and lower-polluting American energy. With strong but achievable standards for power plants, and customized goals for states to cut the carbon pollution that is driving climate change, the Clean Power Plan provides national consistency, accountability and a level playing field while reflecting each state’s energy mix. It also shows the world that the United States is committed to leading global efforts to address climate change.

SUPPORTED BY SCIENCE AND THE LAW

- In 2009, EPA determined – and courts upheld – that greenhouse gas pollution threatens Americans’ health and welfare by leading to long-lasting changes in our climate that can have a range of negative effects on human health and the environment.
- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most prevalent greenhouse gas pollutant, accounting for nearly three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions and 82 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.
- Climate change is one of the greatest environmental challenges we face and affects all Americans’ lives – from stronger storms and longer droughts to increased insurance premiums, food prices, and allergy seasons.
- 2014 was the hottest year in recorded history, and already the first half of this year has been hotter than normal. In fact 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have all occurred since 2000.
- Overwhelmingly, the best scientists in the world, relying on troves of data and millions of measurements collected over the course of decades on land, in air and water, at sea and from space, are telling us that our activities are causing climate change.
- Because greenhouse gas pollution threatens public health and welfare, EPA is using the authorities available under the Clean Air Act to regulate sources of these pollutants.

- The Clean Air Act—under section 111—authorizes EPA to set emission standards for air pollutants emitted by new and existing industrial sources. Section 111d creates a partnership between EPA, states and tribes for regulating *existing* sources – with EPA setting the standards and states and tribes choosing how they will meet it.
- EPA provided unprecedented outreach before and after the proposed Plan was issued and has considered the 4.3 million comments it received in response to the proposal. We have used updated information that provides a solid factual record for the final rule.
- Like dozens of section 111 rules before this one, the Clean Power Plan establishes CO₂ emission performance rates—in this case, for two subcategories of existing fossil fuel-fired electric generating units (EGUs):
 - Fossil fuel-fired electric generating units (generally, coal-fired power plants)
 - Natural gas combined cycle units or Combined cycle units (generally, natural gas plants)
- To maximize the range of choices available to states in implementing the standards and to utilities in meeting them, EPA is establishing interim and final statewide goals in three forms:
 - A rate-based state goal measured in pounds per megawatt hour (lb/MWh);
 - A mass-based state goal measured in total short tons of CO₂;
 - A mass-based state goal with a new source complement measured in total short tons of CO₂.
- States then develop and implement plans that ensure that the power plants in their state - either individually, together or in combination with other measures - achieve the interim CO₂ emissions performance rates over the period of 2022 to 2029 and the final CO₂ emission performance rates, rate-based goals or mass-based goals in 2030 and thereafter.
- The final rule incorporates a variety of thoughtful ideas suggested by commenters. A few examples of helpful ideas that have now become part of the Plan include:
 - Allowing states and utilities more time to get started with their responsibilities under the Plan,
 - Adding additional steps to further maintain the reliability of the electrical grid, and
 - Ensuring that energy efficiency efforts are preserved as a major compliance option.
- These final guidelines are consistent with the law and align with the approach that Congress and EPA have always taken to regulate emissions from this and all other industrial sectors - setting source-level, source-category-wide standards that sources can meet through a variety of technologies and measures.