

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EPA's CLEAN POWER PLAN, CLIMATE CHANGE AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

Carbon pollution threatens the health of Americans and our environment. We are already seeing an increase in temperatures, extreme weather events, drought, flooding, and sea level rise in areas across the United States, and these impacts are expected to get worse as carbon pollution in our atmosphere increases. On August 3, 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as part of President Obama's Climate Action Plan, finalized a historic plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants—the largest source of carbon pollution in the United States. EPA's Clean Power Plan will maintain an affordable, reliable energy system, while cutting pollution and protecting public health and the environment now and for future generations.

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AFRICAN AMERICANS

Many African Americans are already at risk from air pollution. Climate change is expected to lead to increased air pollution, contributing to asthma attacks and other respiratory issues. African Americans continue to have higher rates of asthma than the national rates. About 1 in 9 (11%) non-Hispanic blacks of all ages and about 1 in 6 (17%) of non-Hispanic black children had asthma in 2009, the highest rate among racial/ethnic groups. The greatest rise in asthma rates (almost a 50% increase) was among black children from 2001 through 2009. [[CDC, VitalSigns, accessed June 2014](#)]. Increased levels of ozone caused by climate change will exacerbate asthma attacks and other respiratory ailments that disproportionately harm African Americans, leading to increased hospitalizations. In 2013, approximately 75 million people lived in counties with air pollution levels higher than the health-based standards set by EPA. [EPA, National Air Trends Data, 2013; US Census Bureau, 2010 Census]

Vulnerable communities. Existing health disparities and other inequities increase vulnerability to climate health impacts. Heat waves, air quality, and extreme weather are all climate change related issues that disproportionately affect minority and low income communities. For example, Hurricane Katrina demonstrated how vulnerable certain communities were to extreme weather events, because many low-income and minority New Orleans residents were killed, injured, or had difficulty evacuating and recovering from the storm. [U.S. Global Change Research Program, National Climate Assessment, [2014](#)]

THE CLEAN POWER PLAN: SIGNIFICANT CLIMATE AND PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

The Clean Power Plan achieves significant reductions in carbon pollution from power plants while advancing clean energy innovation, development and deployment. It follows on and will help advance current trends in the power sector toward increased use of low- and no-carbon electricity generation and greater use of energy efficiency, in ways that will preserve

affordability for consumers and continues U.S. leadership in addressing climate change. States and businesses have already charted a course toward cleaner, more efficient power, and the Clean Power Plan builds on their progress.

The transition to clean energy is happening faster than anticipated. This means carbon and air pollution are already decreasing, improving public health each and every year. The Clean Power Plan accelerates this momentum, putting us on pace to cut this dangerous pollution to historically low levels in the future. When the Clean Power Plan is fully in place in 2030, carbon pollution from the power sector will be 32 percent below 2005 levels, securing progress and making sure it continues.

The transition to cleaner sources of energy will better protect Americans from other harmful air pollution, too. By 2030, emissions of SO₂ from power plants will be 90 percent lower compared to 2005 levels, and emissions of NO_x will be 72 percent lower. Because these pollutants can create dangerous soot and smog, the historically low levels mean we will avoid thousands of premature deaths and have thousands fewer asthma attacks and hospitalizations in 2030 and every year beyond.

Within this larger context, the CPP itself is projected to contribute significant pollution reductions, resulting in important benefits.

The Clean Power Plan will:

- Cut hundreds of millions of tons of carbon pollution and hundreds of thousands of tons of harmful soot- and smog-forming particle pollution that makes people sick. Together these reductions will result in significant near-term public health benefits, especially for the most vulnerable citizens.
 - From the soot and smog reductions alone, for every dollar invested through the Clean Power Plan—American families will see up to \$4 in health benefits in 2030.
 - The Clean Power Plan will significantly improve health by avoiding each year:
 - 3,600 premature deaths
 - 1,700 heart attacks
 - 90,000 asthma attacks
 - 300,000 missed work days and school days
- Put our nation on track to cut carbon pollution from the power sector by 32 percent by 2030 while maintaining electric system reliability and affordable electricity.
 - In addition to helping make our electric system cleaner, the Clean Power Plan will make electricity more affordable in the long run. EPA's analysis of impacts on electricity bills shows that Americans are expected to save over \$80 annually on their utility bills by 2030.

- Reduce CO₂ emissions from power plants—an essential step towards reducing the impacts of climate change and providing a more certain future for our environment, our health and future generations.
 - By acting on climate now, we are fulfilling a moral obligation to our children and grandchildren to leave them with a healthier, more stable planet.
- Change the international dynamic and leverage international action. Climate change is a global challenge and requires global action. When the U.S. leads, other nations follow.

HELPING COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM CLEAN ENERGY

The Clean Power Plan gives states the opportunity to ensure that communities share in the benefits of a clean energy economy, including energy efficiency and renewable energy. EPA is creating a Clean Energy Incentive Program (CEIP) to reward early investments in wind and solar generation, as well as demand-side energy efficiency programs implemented in low-income communities, that deliver results during 2020 and/or 2021. Through this program, EPA intends to make allowances or emission rate credits (ERCs) available to states that incentivize these investments. EPA is providing additional incentives to encourage energy efficiency investments in low-income communities.

EPA also will provide communities and states information on how to access existing financial and technical assistance programs that can help communities increase use of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. These include federal programs and resources, such as: the National Community Solar Partnership, which the White House announced last month, to increase access to solar for all Americans, particularly low- and moderate- income communities; and the Clean Energy Impact Investment Center, which the Department of Energy will launch to make information about energy and climate programs at DOE and other government agencies accessible and more understandable to the public.

ASSESSING LOCAL IMPACTS

The Clean Power Plan includes information on communities living near power plants, and EPA will provide additional information to facilitate engagement between communities and states as implementation of the rule moves forward. For example, the agency will conduct air quality evaluations to determine impacts that state plans may have on vulnerable communities. EPA encourages states to conduct analyses to help states, communities and utilities understand the potential localized and community impacts of state plans.

To help with these analyses, EPA will ensure emissions data is available and easily accessed through the Clean Power Plan Communities web page. The agency also will provide demographic information and other data, along with examples analyses that states have conducted to assess the impact of other rules, via the web page.

GET INVOLVED

Public engagement was essential throughout the development of the Clean Power Plan, and EPA will continue to engage with communities and the public during the rule's implementation. The EPA will also be conducting a robust outreach effort for communities throughout the comment period for the proposed federal plan.

To ensure opportunities for communities to continue to participate in decision-making, EPA will provide training and resources throughout the implementation process. EPA is also requiring that states demonstrate how they are actively engaging with communities in the formulation of state plans developed for the Clean Power Plan. To learn more, please visit the Clean Power Plan Portal for Communities at www2.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/clean-power-plan-toolbox-communities.

LEARN MORE

For more information on the Clean Power Plan, visit www2.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan.

For tips on how you can reduce your carbon footprint, visit www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/.