

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EPA's CLEAN POWER PLAN, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FAITH COMMUNITIES

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 VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Faith communities emphasize the need to care for the health and well-being of all people, including protecting those most vulnerable. Additionally, faith communities stress the importance of responsible stewardship of our resources for both current and future generations. Climate change and carbon pollution impact all the world's people, but especially children, the poor, and the elderly.

Changes in climate are impacting plants, animals, and ecosystems on all continents and across the oceans.

Climate change directly affects ecosystems and species, and also interacts with other human stressors on the environment. Many land and water animals have been affected, showing changes in abundance, geographic ranges, seasonal activities, and migration patterns. [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fifth Assessment Report, Working Group 2, Summary for Policymakers, 2014]

Climate change impacts disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable across the world. Climate-related hazards, including increases in extreme weather events, impact poor people's livelihoods through losses in crop yields, destroyed homes, food insecurity, and increased food prices. Climate change is expected to worsen existing poverty, exacerbate inequalities, and trigger new vulnerabilities in the developing world. [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fifth Assessment Report, Working Group 2, Livelihoods and Poverty, 2014]

Health risks from climate change are especially serious for children, the sick, the elderly, and the poor.

Because children's lungs are still growing, they are at increased risk for respiratory conditions that are made worse or caused by air pollution, which is projected to increase in many densely-populated areas due to climate change. For the elderly and the sick, existing health conditions, such as cardiovascular and respiratory disease, can be made worse under the added stresses of climate change. The poor are less able to afford the kinds of measures that can protect them from and treat them for various health impacts. Absent other changes, climate change will amplify some of these existing health threats. [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 towards 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:
 - Up to 3,600 premature deaths
 - Up to 1,700 heart attacks
 - 90,000 asthma attacks
 - 300,000 missed workdays and schooldays
- Put our nation on track to cut carbon pollution from the power sector by 32 percent in 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. In addition, the Administration's POWER+ Plan will invest in workers and jobs, address important legacy costs in coal country and drive the development of coal technology as our country moves to a clean energy economy.

ASSESSING LOCAL IMPACTS

The final rule 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 Clean Power Plan 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.

EPA's Clean Power Plan Communities Portal hosts EPA's local analyses as well as tools and information that can inform state analyses: www2.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/clean-power-plan-toolbox-communities.

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 be providing 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 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/.