

OHIO EDITORIAL BOARD/OPINION PAGE BRIEFER:

OHIO'S STAKE IN STRONGER EPA CARBON POLLUTION STANDARDS

*Prepared by the Natural Resources Defense Council
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OVERVIEW

Ohio has a significant interest in the pending action by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect Americans from dangerous carbon pollution from new power plants – pollution that threatens the health of Ohio residents and other Americans and also fuels some of the increasingly extreme weather in Ohio and the rest of the U.S.

CARBON POLLUTION-RELATED CONSEQUENCES IN OHIO

(Unless otherwise indicated, all information cited below is sourced to:
<http://www.nrdc.org/health/climate/oh.asp>.)

Air Pollution:

Rising temperatures increase ozone smog formation in many areas. Increasing levels of smog are associated with increased hospital admission rates and death for people with respiratory diseases such as asthma, and worsens the health of people suffering from cardiac or pulmonary disease.

- Warming will cause Cleveland to have 11 more days per summer that exceed EPA's air quality standards, and Columbus will see a 28 percent drop in the number of clean air days per summer.
- Four Ohio cities rank among the 20 most soot-polluted in the country.
- 72 counties have ragweed pollution and 28 counties have unhealthy smog levels; at least 25 counties suffer from both.

Prevalence and Cost of Asthma in Ohio (as of April 2011)

Over 1 million Ohio residents — including 257,027 children -- suffer from asthma, with direct costs of treating Ohio's worsening asthma epidemic already exceeding \$2.1 billion.

- Number of Ohio adults with asthma: 832,338.
- Number of Ohio children with asthma: 257,027.
- The five Ohio counties with the most asthma cases today are: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Summit, and Montgomery.
- Pediatric emergency room visits in Ohio due to asthma: 25,446.
- Pediatric hospital stays in Ohio due to asthma: 4,112.
- Estimated direct cost of asthma in Ohio: \$2.19 billion.

See http://www.noharm.org/lib/downloads/climate/asthma/OH_state_fact_sheet.pdf.

Heat-related Disease and Illness:

As temperatures increase, so do the number of deaths and illnesses occurring from heat stress, heatstroke, cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease. Heat waves cause the most harm among the elderly, young children, and in economically disadvantaged communities. City dwellers are also at risk because of elevated temperatures from the “urban heat island effect.”

- Nearly 60,000 people in Ohio live in an area where average summertime temperatures set records in 2010 and 6 counties also saw record-breaking nighttime temperatures.

- By the 2080s, cities like Cincinnati could see 85 days over 90°F (32°C) and a month of days with temperatures over 100°F (38°C).
- A 1995 Chicago heat wave killed more than 700 people -- by mid-century, Cincinnati could expect two similar heat waves every year.

Infectious Disease:

Climate change will affect patterns of diseases such as dengue fever, West Nile virus, and Lyme disease. Increasing temperatures and rainfall have been associated with increased occurrence and transmission of insect-borne diseases like West Nile virus. Hotter temperatures can lead to more rapid development of dangerous pathogens within insect carriers and allow these diseases to expand their range into new, once cooler, regions. Approximately 173 million Americans in at least 28 states live in counties with mosquitoes that can carry dengue fever, a painful viral illness that’s increased globally 30-fold in the last 50 years.

- 21 cases in Ohio of Dengue Fever were reported between 1995-2005, and 20 counties have a type of mosquito that can transmit the virus (as of 2005).
- 715 cases in Ohio of West Nile virus were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) between 1999-2010.
- 933 cases in Ohio of Lyme disease were reported to CDC between 1990-2008.

Drought:

Projected temperature increases in the summer will increase the likelihood of water shortages and drought, threatening the availability of water for drinking and irrigation. Droughts harm crops, diminishing food variety, nutritional content, and availability.

- Temperature increases in the summer in Ohio will increase the likelihood of drought.
- About 80 percent of the state's counties now face higher risks of water shortages by mid-century as the result of climate change.

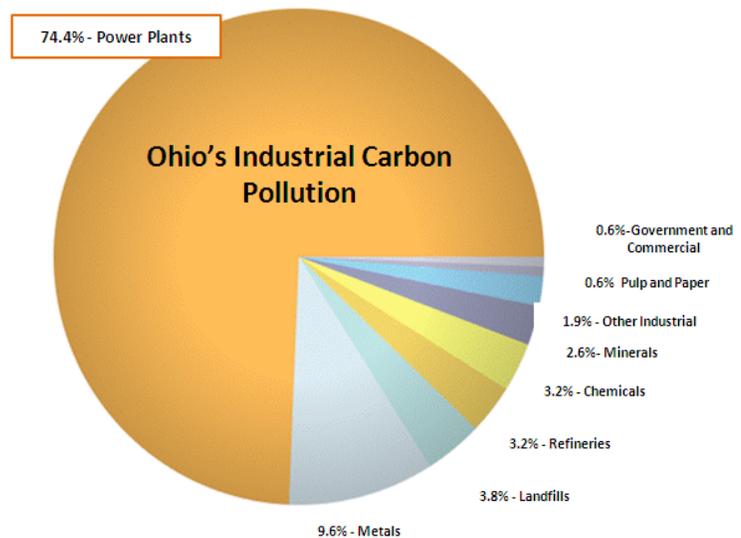
Carbon Pollution Sources:

Coal-fired power plants are Ohio’s biggest industrial polluters.

Standards to cut power plants’ carbon pollution will also help reduce their emissions of other dangerous pollutants, including the pollutants that produce dangerous fine particles (soot).

Here are the impacts to citizens of Ohio from the fine particle (or soot) pollution from coal-fired power plants in the state:

- Total Mortality: 1,221
- Hospital Admissions: 835
- Heart Attacks: 1,891



Source: US EPA
<http://ghgdata.epa.gov/ghgp/main.do>

See http://www.catf.us/coal/problems/power_plants/existing/map.php?state=Ohio.

BACKGROUND ON THE EPA STANDARDS

After years of delay, EPA is on the verge of issuing the first national limits on the carbon dioxide that will spew from the smokestacks of electric power plants to be built over the next decade. EPA is following the Clean Air Act – passed by Congress, of course – and *two* Supreme Court decisions.

There are currently no national limits on the life- threatening carbon pollution coming from stationary sources like power plants and factories. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is attempting to safeguard our health by reducing this carbon pollution and lessening the impact of climate change. We can protect the health of our families and communities by supporting the EPA’s efforts to update the Clean Air Act to address more sources and types of the pollution that cause climate change and these associated health risks.

Poll after poll confirms that the American people count on EPA to protect them from dangerous carbon pollution, don’t trust polluters to police themselves, and don’t buy the House Republicans’ claims that EPA safeguards hurt jobs. (See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).)

LEADING HEALTH GROUPS AND EXPERTS RECOGNIZE THE HEALTH IMPACTS

Over 120 health organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American Public Health Association, American Thoracic Society and others are on record stating:

“Climate change is a serious public health issue. As temperatures rise, more Americans will be exposed to conditions that can result in illness and death due to respiratory illness, heat- and weather-related stress and disease carried by insects. These health issues are likely to have the greatest impact on our most vulnerable communities, including children, older adults, those with serious health conditions and the most economically disadvantaged.”

For more information, see

<http://www.apha.org/about/news/pressreleases/2010/epa+group+letter+release.htm>.

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