



FACT SHEET

CARBON POLLUTION STANDARDS: THE CENTERPIECE OF U.S. CLIMATE ACTION

In 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from the nation's largest emitters: coal- and gas-fired power plants, which account for one-third of all U.S. climate-changing pollution. The EPA's Clean Power Plan rule for existing power plants and carbon pollution standards for newly built power plants represent the most significant step the U.S. has taken to address the urgent threat of climate change. These readily achievable pollution limits, which are based on cost-effective technologies and practices already widely in use across the power industry, build on current market trends toward cleaner sources of electricity.

WHY LIMIT CARBON POLLUTION?

- Climate change is an urgent threat to Americans. Rising temperatures are already fueling more severe storms and droughts and causing sea levels to rise along our coasts.¹ Failure to curb the pollution driving climate change will have severe consequences for our health, our security, and our economy.²
- Global action to limit climate-changing pollution could help our nation avoid tens of thousands of deaths from dirty air and extreme heat; hundreds of millions of hours in lost labor; billions of dollars in damages to roads, bridges, and coastal properties; and billions of dollars in damages to our agricultural sector.³
- Fossil fuel-fired power plants are the largest source of U.S. carbon pollution, and the electric power sector accounts for one-third of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.⁴

BASIS IN LAW

- The Clean Power Plan carries out the EPA's statutory duty to set standards limiting emissions of dangerous air pollutants like carbon dioxide from power plants and other major stationary sources.⁵ In *Massachusetts v. EPA*, the Supreme Court determined "that emissions of carbon dioxide qualify as air pollution subject to regulation under the Act."⁶
- Several years later, the Supreme Court went further, holding that Section 111 of the Act provides that the "agency must establish standards of performance" limiting air pollution from new power plants and "then requires regulation of existing sources within the same category."⁷
- The Clean Power Plan appropriately carries out this duty, drawing on the cost-effective methods of reducing pollution already employed by many states and utilities.

AMERICANS BENEFIT: HEALTH, CONSUMER SAVINGS, ENVIRONMENT

- The Clean Power Plan and standards for new power plants will help clean up our air by reducing unhealthy particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides that contribute to soot and ozone smog.⁸ As a result, the Clean Power Plan could prevent up to 3,600 premature deaths, 1,700 heart attacks, 90,000 asthma attacks, and 300,000 missed workdays and schooldays in 2030.⁹

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- Reducing carbon pollution will also help limit climate-related health impacts like heat-related deaths, storm-related deaths and injuries, mosquito- and tick-borne diseases like Zika, and water- and food-borne illnesses.¹⁰
- The Clean Power Plan is projected to yield up to \$20 billion in climate benefits, plus public health benefits of \$14 to \$34 billion each year. These massive benefits outweigh the Plan’s total projected cost of compliance of \$5 to \$8 billion per year.¹¹
- If states used a modest level of energy efficiency to comply with the Clean Power Plan, consumers could save an average of 8 percent on their monthly household electricity bills in 2030. Significant use of energy efficiency could boost bill savings to 20 percent, on average.¹²

BUILDING ON STATE ACTION

- The Clean Power Plan builds on progress made by states and power companies to reduce carbon pollution over the last two decades. For example, solar generation has increased more than seven-fold in Nevada in the last five years and five-fold in North Carolina in the last two years. Iowa and Texas nearly doubled their wind generation over the past five years. The Clean Power Plan reinforces and builds on these market trends by embracing the kind of flexible strategies that the industry already employs.¹³
- More than 2.5 million people in the United States already work in the clean energy sector, including nearly 414,000 in the wind and solar energy industries. The Clean Power Plan has helped send a strong market signal to the private sector that clean energy and energy efficiency is good for business.¹⁴

BROAD SUPPORT

- Americans filed more than 8 million comments in favor of the EPA’s plans to limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants—the most ever received by the agency.¹⁵
- Polling also has repeatedly shown that most Americans support limiting carbon pollution from power plants.¹⁶
- A recent survey shows a majority of Trump voters support upholding or strengthening current climate change policies and think U.S. companies should be required to reduce carbon pollution.¹⁷

ENDNOTES

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- 6 *Id.* (citing *Massachusetts v. EPA*, 549 U.S. 497, 528-529 (2007)).
- 7 *Id.*
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- 14 G. Parson, J. Benzak, G. Carlisle, et al., *Clean Jobs America*, Environmental Entrepreneurs, March 2016, www.e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CleanJobsAmerica_FINAL.pdf
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- 16 A. Leiserowitz, E. Maibach, C. Roser-Renouf, et al., “Politics & Global Warming, November 2016,” Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, December 13, 2016, climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/politics-global-warming-november-2016/. League of Conservation Voters, “Memo: Americans Strongly Support Climate Action,” lcv.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016-climate-polling-memo.pdf (Accessed January 27, 2017). Sierra Club, “Ohioans Strongly Support Clean Power Plan,” November 13, 2015, content.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2015/11/ohioans-strongly-support-clean-power-plan.
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