The EPA's New Standards for Fossil Fuel Power Plants Will Improve Public Health While Tackling the Climate Crisis

Carbon pollution not only impacts the climate but the health of communities. Ensuring we have clean air will improve lives and pay dividends for the U.S. economy. On May 11, 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed new carbon pollution standards for coal and natural gas-fired power plants, which will deliver up to **$85 billion** in climate and public health benefits over the next two decades. These standards will reduce carbon dioxide emissions and other pollutants from new and existing power plants, helping the United States achieve its climate goals while ensuring that people can breathe clean air. Importantly, the EPA estimates that these updated rules will have little impact on families' electricity bills.

Cutting pollution and emissions will save lives and improve health, and the EPA expects this rule to provide $85 billion in total climate and health benefits over the next 20 years.

These regulations would help the United States avoid up to 617 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the next 20 years. Reducing fossil fuel emissions can profoundly impact people's lives as many types of air pollution can cause serious and expensive health problems like premature deaths, pre-term birth, respiratory infections, and heart problems – all with associated household and healthcare costs. Cutting carbon emissions also reduces climate costs that come from changes in water supply and water quality due to both drought and extreme rainfall, the increased risk of storm surges and flooding along coasts, risks to the electric grid, and substantial disruptions to agriculture like crop failures.

In just 2030, the lower emissions from this rule would provide $5.4 billion in climate and between $6.5 and $14 billion in health savings.

In 2030 alone, the proposed standards would provide between $12 and 20 billion in climate and health benefits and prevent substantial health and economic costs across the U.S., including:

- approximately 1,300 fewer premature deaths,
- more than 800 fewer hospital and emergency room visits,
- more than 300,000 fewer asthma attacks,
- 38,000 fewer school absence days, and
- 66,000 fewer lost workdays.

The new standards would avoid 89 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions in 2030, which would be comparable to taking 22 million gasoline-powered cars off the road.

These new standards will benefit nearly every state but will be particularly important for states that are still heavily reliant on fossil fuel power plants.

The table below takes the annual economic benefits for 2030 and estimates how those benefits would be shared across the country. Florida, Texas, and Pennsylvania would see the largest

climate benefits from this regulation with $557, $529, and $413 million in benefits, respectively in 2030, but nearly every U.S. state would see tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in climate benefits.

The states with the largest potential climate benefits are also the states that would see that largest reduction in harmful carbon emissions. In Florida alone, the reductions in power plant emissions would be equivalent to keeping 2.3 million cars off the road in 2030.

In 2030, Proposed EPA Rule Would Drastically Cut Emissions and Provide Economic Benefits Nationwide		
State	**Emission Reductions: Equivalent Number of Gasoline-Powered Cars Off the Road**	**Economic Climate Benefits**
Alabama	1,007,000	$249,392,000
Arizona	531,000	$131,612,000
Arkansas	325,000	$80,405,000
California	655,000	$162,161,000
Colorado	203,000	$50,330,000
Connecticut	136,000	$33,786,000
Delaware	76,000	$18,711,000
Florida	2,250,000	$557,431,000
Georgia	747,000	$185,087,000
Idaho	127,000	$31,546,000
Illinois	445,000	$110,256,000
Indiana	740,000	$183,365,000
Iowa	324,000	$80,331,000
Kansas	17,000	$4,191,000
Kentucky	530,000	$131,258,000
Louisiana	957,000	$237,078,000
Maine	24,000	$6,016,000
Maryland	226,000	$55,989,000
Massachusetts	151,000	$37,518,000
Michigan	804,000	$199,051,000
Minnesota	172,000	$42,550,000
Mississippi	552,000	$136,685,000
Missouri	312,000	$77,388,000
Montana	75,000	$18,600,000

Nebraska	48,000	$11,910,000
Nevada	214,000	$53,000,000
New Hampshire	36,000	$8,921,000
New Jersey	497,000	$123,043,000
New Mexico	162,000	$40,120,000
New York	639,000	$158,360,000
North Carolina	559,000	$138,536,000
North Dakota	125,000	$31,001,000
Ohio	1,194,000	$295,716,000
Oklahoma	379,000	$93,775,000
Oregon	41,000	$10,253,000
Pennsylvania	1,669,000	$413,301,000
Rhode Island	44,000	$10,812,000
South Carolina	520,000	$128,696,000
South Dakota	38,000	$9,425,000
Tennessee	251,000	$62,283,000
Texas	2,136,000	$529,130,000
Utah	284,000	$70,294,000
Vermont	1,000	$126,000
Virginia	674,000	$166,928,000
Washington	121,000	$30,020,000
West Virginia	346,000	$85,811,000
Wisconsin	360,000	$89,194,000
Wyoming	75,000	$18,497,000
National	**21,800,000**	**$5,400,000,000**

Source: JEC calculations based on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data. Emission reductions are presented as the number of passenger vehicle equivalents.
Note: No data reported for Alaska, Hawaii, or the District of Columbia or the territories. All data refer to 2030.

These new standards follow the best system of emissions reduction, utilizing cutting-edge technology.

These new technology-based standards would require new fossil fuel-fired power plants to include technology in their construction that reduce harmful emissions. The proposal also establishes emission guidelines that include technological adaptations for states to pursue that would aim to limit carbon pollution from existing fossil fuel power plants.

As required by the Clean Air Act, this proposal balances the reduction in emissions alongside other factors like the available sources of energy, the costs of adaptation, and the range of

existing technologies like carbon capture and storage and clean hydrogen. The EPA is also proposing to repeal the Affordable Clean Energy rule from 2019 because it does not reflect the best system for emissions reduction.

The economic benefits will likely be much larger, as reducing other pollutants can lead to better health outcomes.

While the national-level health benefits are already large, the calculations do not include the benefits of:

- fewer people having chronic responses to air pollution,
- the health effects from air pollutants not examined in the EPA's initial study,
- ecosystem effects,
- and visibility impairments, which affect outdoor recreation and national parks.

For context, the eastern U.S. experiences some of the largest fossil fuel-associated air pollution mortality globally, including 876 excess annual deaths of children due to lower respiratory infections across North America. The impacts of avoiding these health and ecosystem issues are significant but are not included in the EPA's current analysis.

Reducing pollution from power plants will benefit many communities of color that historically have been exposed to dangerously high levels of pollution.

Coal plants subject to the proposed standard are disproportionately near Black communities and communities that are two times below the poverty level. The EPA is also aware of two existing power plants within tribal jurisdictions that are potentially affected by this proposal. One is the Four Corners Steam Electricity Station on the Navajo Nation, which is within New Mexico's boundaries and will be retired in 2031. The new standards will help ensure localities most negatively affected by carbon pollution will become cleaner and healthier for their residents.

This proposal is also projected to reduce mercury emissions, which in turn will reduce mercury in fish that live in in waterbodies near affected powerplants. This reduction will most benefit communities that locally source their own food near affected powerplants, including minority and low-income households who are more likely to eat the fish from the affected areas.

Together, the EPA's new proposed rules for fossil-fuel power plants reflect a common-sense and best available technology approach to curbing emissions. This will improve Americans' health and economic well-being across the nation.