



More Action Needed to Address Health Impacts of Climate Change

April 8, 2015—On April 7, the [White House announced a series of actions](#) to protect communities from the health impacts of climate change. "Many excellent reports, apps, data gathering and educational initiatives were announced," said Laura Small, a Policy Associate at the Environmental and Energy Study Institute. "We're pleased to see the President taking action to gather more data about the public health impacts of climate change, and we're particularly excited about the decision to educate new healthcare professionals about climate change health risks. However, we hope the Administration will announce direct actions to shore up the health sector's ability to deal with climate change exacerbated vector-borne diseases, mental health issues, decreased air quality, and physical threats from wildfires and other extreme weather."

The Third National Climate Assessment (NCA), released in May 2014, describes the health threats the United States faces from climate change, including the amplification of existing heat-related health issues and extension of the habitats of disease-carrying mosquitoes and ticks. Children, the elderly, low-income communities of color and the immunocompromised are especially at risk.

EESI supports the Administration's actions to directly address the causes of climate change, such as the Clean Power Plan, a draft regulation on carbon emissions from existing power plants. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates the Clean Power Plan could prevent 140,000 to 150,000 cases of asthma in children and 2,700 to 6,600 premature deaths by 2030, providing \$7 of health benefits for every dollar spent. The Clean Power Plan is an example of how climate change mitigation can reap great public health benefits.

Many climate-changing air pollutants emitted when fossil fuels are burned are harmful in and of themselves, even without taking into account their climate-changing properties. The health effects of these climate-changing air pollutants are especially dire for communities that live, work, and go to school near power plants, refineries, and roadways. That represents a lot of individuals: 40 million Americans spend a significant amount of time in close proximity to a major roadway, for instance, and breathe in the tailpipe emissions from vehicles running on fossil fuels. In addition to accounting for 28 percent of U.S. greenhouse gases, tailpipe emissions contain harmful ultra-fine particles (UFPs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that result from the incomplete combustion of aromatics in the gasoline. UFPs and PAHs have been linked to a host of health and developmental issues, including autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cardio-pulmonary effects, and cancers.

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