

America's Clean Power Plan for existing power plants

"Westar Energy recognizes the growing concerns regarding the threat of climate change and believes our industry must take a leadership role in this debate." Climate Change Policy, Westar website

What is America's Clean Power Plan?

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants.

Why do we need to cut carbon pollution from power plants?

In 2009, EPA determined that greenhouse gas pollution threatens Americans' health and welfare by leading to long lasting changes in our climate that can have a range of negative effects on human health and the environment. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the primary greenhouse gas pollutant, accounting for nearly three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions and 84% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The science shows that climate change is already posing risks to our health and our economy. The Clean Power Plan for Existing Power Plants and the Carbon Pollution Standards for New Power Plants will maintain an affordable, reliable energy system, while cutting pollution and protecting our health and environment now and for future generations.

Unchecked carbon pollution leads to long-lasting changes in our climate, such as rising global temperatures, rising sea levels, changes in weather and precipitation patterns and changes in ecosystems, habitats and species diversity.

These changes threaten America's health and welfare for current and future generations. Public health risks include: More heat waves and drought; worsening smog (also called ground-level ozone pollution); increasing the intensity of extreme events, like hurricanes, extreme precipitation and flooding; increasing the range of ticks and mosquitoes, which can spread disease such as Lyme disease and West Nile virus. Our most vulnerable citizens, including children, older adults, people with heart or lung disease and people living in poverty may be most at risk from the health impacts of climate change.

What is the state's role in the Clean Power Plan?

Under the Clean Air Act, section 111(d) EPA establishes guidelines to control air pollution from existing power plants and then Kansas designs a program to meet those guidelines and meet our federal reduction target.

How can Kansas cost effectively meet our target?

State policies, like the RPS have given us a head start in reducing carbon emissions from our power plants. By integrating wind energy and upgrading existing coal plants, Kansas utilities have decreased emissions by over 19% since 2005. Increasing the RPS would create additional economic benefit, while decreasing emissions.

While renewable resources like wind and solar, emit no carbon when producing electricity, energy efficiency measures also displace power from existing fossil fuel plants. There are currently limited energy efficiency offerings for Kansas consumers, thereby providing a huge opportunity for utilities to make investments that will save customers money on their utilities bills while at the same time helping Kansas to meet their emission reduction target. Investments in energy efficiency create local jobs for HVAC, insulation and weatherization companies while improving the safety and comfort in Kansas homes.

