

Carbon Pollution Standard For New Power Plants

The EPA's Carbon Pollution Standard sets the first ever, national limits on carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main pollutant causing global climate change.

Key Points

The Standard:

- Establishes a limit of 1,000 lbs of CO₂ pollution per megawatt hour, which is roughly equivalent to natural gas combined cycle generation,
- Applies only to large (greater than 25 megawatts) future (absolutely does not affect any existing plants), fossil fuel fired power plants,
- Allows any plant that has a permit and begins construction within 1 year to move forward without complying, and
- Allows for traditional coal-fired plant to be built, so long as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) — or an equivalent carbon reducing technology — is implemented within ten years of the plant's operation

Economic Impact:

The Standard will have minimal economic impact. Given current energy market trends, most notably the low price of natural gas, most new construction planned by power companies will meet the Standard.

What it does do is ensure long-term investments in energy infrastructure reflect the reality of climate change. This will drive private investment to clean energy, such as carbon capture and storage technology and renewables, which makes America more competitive, more energy independent, and creates good, domestic jobs.

Climate and Health Impact:

Carbon pollution safeguards will help protect Americans from significant risks to both health and home. Research shows that climate change leads to higher levels of pollutants that inflame the airways, trigger asthma attacks, and cause respiratory disease. Carbon pollution also intensifies extreme weather events that can damage homes. Since most American families do not have the finances to deal with damages caused by intense flooding or droughts, reducing carbon emissions that strengthen these storms will save families money and stabilize communities.

This Standard is the first step toward meeting our moral commitment to addressing climate change. There is much more that needs to be done, but this is a reasonable and necessary first step as it makes sure that power companies do not revert back to building conventional power generation without the necessary climate and health safeguards.