

Statement on the Environmental Protection Agency's Proposed Rule to Replace the Clean Power Plan

August 21, 2018

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today [released](#) its proposed rule to replace the “Clean Power Plan (CPP).” The CPP was a rule proposed under the last administration to achieve a meaningful reduction in the US national output of carbon dioxide to reach internationally-agreed upon greenhouse gas emission targets to combat climate change. The statement below can be attributed to Dr. Mona Sarfaty, Director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, a coalition of 21 medical societies representing more than half a million doctors.

“The Administration’s new proposed rule ignores or outright rejects the overwhelming scientific evidence on the profound health and environmental risks of dirty fossil fuels. This plan is negligent in responding to the health harms of air pollution and climate change, even while the EPA’s own assessment of the plan forecasts there will be a large increase in the number of Americans dying from air pollution as the result.

“The misleadingly named ‘Affordable Clean Energy Rule’ not only fails to protect our health, our air and water, or our climate, but it will make them worse. As doctors, we can only treat a patient if we take full measure of a problem, rely on evidence and identify the best possible treatment. The EPA must do the same and propose national standards that strongly support and accelerate the inevitable transition to clean energy—because clean energy is healthful energy, and dirty energy harms the health of too many Americans. Especially vulnerable are people who breathe pollution from coal-fired plants and children whose brains and lungs can be harmed. We cannot settle for a plan that isn’t a serious effort to save lives and make our environment safer.

“The cost of failing to act is enormous—from increases in lung disease and heavy metal poisoning to the many health harms from climate change that doctors are already seeing among their patients. Fortunately, eliminating air pollution and the dirty energy that causes it can be one of the greatest boons to the health of Americans. If we put in place

strong policies to truly support affordable clean energy, we will see improved health immediately from cleaner air, a safer environment, and avoided health harms from climate change.

For additional comment on specific topics, you can reach out to the following contacts:

- For comment on the environmental impact on children’s health from climate change, you can contact Jerome A. Paulson, MD, FAAP, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), at [202-302-9012](tel:202-302-9012) or jerry@envirohealthdoctor.com. Dr. Paulson is the Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics at the George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences and Emeritus Professor of Environmental & Occupational Health at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at GWU.
- For comment on the impacts of climate change on adult health, you can contact Nitin Damle, MD, FACP, American College of Physicians (ACP), at sdamle@scim.necoxmail.com. He is a practicing internist and founder and managing partner South County Internal Medicine in Wakefield, Rhode Island, and Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Background on the Health Harms of Climate Change

You can read more on the ways that climate change is harming health in the 2017 [“Medical Alert!” report, issued by the Medical Society Consortium.](#)

- While climate change threatens the health of every American, some people are more vulnerable and are most likely to be harmed, including: infants and children; pregnant women; older adults; people with disabilities; people with pre-existing or chronic medical conditions, including mental illnesses; people with limited means; and minorities.
- More than 80% of the current health burden resulting from the changing climate occurs in children younger than five years old, according to the World Health Organization.
- Air pollution has a demonstrated negative impact on the development of children’s [brain](#) and [lungs](#).

- According to an [MIT study](#), 200,000 people die in the U.S. every year due to air pollution.
- While many sources of air pollution should be addressed, [coal accounts for 79% of the total carbon pollution from the energy sector](#) and harm health in several ways:
 - Pollutants are known to cause damage to human lungs.
 - The toxic particles formed from burning coal fall into waterways and contaminate fish that are subsequently eaten by people who fish in those waters.
 - The coal ash residue that is left after the coal is burned also contains toxic heavy metals including lead, mercury, cadmium, and arsenic that seep into groundwater and enter sources of drinking water, including residential wells.

About the Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health

Members of the Medical Society Consortium include: American College of Physicians (ACP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM), American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA), American Geriatrics Society (AGS), Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine (AIHM), American Association of Community Psychiatrists (AACCP), National Medical Association (NMA), Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM), American Telemedicine Association (ATA), Society of Gynecologic Oncology (SGO), the California Chapter of American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP-CA), American College of Osteopathic Internists (ACOI), American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychiatric Association (APA), American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM).