

New Trump coal regulations will kill as many as 1,400 Americans annually by 2030

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A study by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released Tuesday on the social impact of the agency's proposed lowering of emission standards for power plants in the US concludes that as many as 1,400 more people will die prematurely every year by 2030.

The 285-page report, titled "Regulatory Impact Analysis for the Proposed Emission Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Existing Electric Utility Generating Units," estimates the effects of the rollback of restrictions placed on power plant emissions under the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, which gradually imposed tougher emission standards on coal-fired power plants to incentivize them to switch to cleaner energy sources.

The so-called "Affordable Clean Energy" proposal would give the states broad authority to set less stringent emission standards and regulate coal-fired power plants as they saw fit. Tuesday's EPA report assesses the impact of its proposal on a variety of measures of social well-being, including electricity prices, environmental impact and public health, among others. According to the report, the higher levels of fine particulates in the air that would result from the plan's implementation would cause between 470 and 1,400 more people to die prematurely annually by the year 2030.

In addition, the report found that by 2030 as many as 15,000 cases of upper respiratory complications as well as 48,000 new cases of exacerbated asthma could result every year if the plan were implemented, while children in the US would miss a combined total of 120,000 more days of school.

It is likely that even these estimates may underestimate the true impact, as the EPA has no interest in informing the public of the scale of the death and disease it is preparing to unleash.

The agency is presently attempting to quietly implement a policy to restrict the use of its own data to provide accurate measures of the health effects of various policies by allowing its scientists to use only data that can be made public. Since the confidentiality of health records is protected by federal law and many patients are unwilling to make their records public, this would make it next to impossible for the agency to accurately assess the implications of federal policies.

The Trump administration has sought to sell the Affordable Clean Energy plan as a means of restoring coal jobs, increasing economic growth and, in keeping with its broader economic and geo-strategic policy, strengthening national security.

Touting the plan at a West Virginia rally on Tuesday, Trump told the crowd: "We love clean, beautiful West Virginia coal. And you know, that's indestructible stuff. In times of war, in times of conflict, you can blow up those windmills, they fall down real quick. You can blow up pipelines... You can do a lot of things to those solar panels, but you know what you can't hurt? Coal."

The expected implementation of the Affordable Clean Energy rule, in full knowledge of the thousands of people who will die or be made ill as a result, is just the latest in a series of attacks by the Trump administration on the health and lives of workers.

In April, the EPA announced that it would roll back the fuel efficiency standards for automobiles implemented by the Obama administration, which set a series of benchmarks to reduce pollution, particularly greenhouse gas emissions, in order to mitigate somewhat the impact of climate change.

Trump's gutting of the Obama administration's restrictions on power plant emissions, which at best represented a woefully inadequate attempt to improve air quality and public health, will not to any significant

degree bring back jobs in the coal industry or improve the standard of living of workers displaced by the industry's decline.

Rather, this measure represents an attempt to sacrifice the lives and health of thousands of workers, who will be hardest hit by the proposed change, for the further enrichment of the coal bosses and energy giants.

As with other federal regulatory agencies, Trump has placed the EPA in the hands of long-time shills for the corporations. Just last month, Scott Pruitt was forced to resign as EPA administrator following revelations of his use of agency funds for first-class plane tickets and lavish "personal security" measures. The former Oklahoma attorney general, a climate-change skeptic, had close ties to the fossil fuel industry and spent years suing the EPA over ozone and methane emissions rules and coal plant regulations.

Pruitt was replaced by another climate change skeptic, Andrew Wheeler, as acting EPA administrator. Wheeler is a long-time lobbyist for the energy industry. He was formerly a lawyer for the coal magnate Robert E. Murray and lobbied against Obama administration environmental regulations.

The Democrats have offered little criticism of Trump for this or any of his other attacks on workers, immigrants and democratic rights, instead waging a right-wing campaign to cast the president as a Russian stooge and censor the Internet.

The potential annual death toll of 1,400 people, if the Affordable Clean Energy rule is implemented, is the equivalent of a Hurricane Katrina every 15 months or a 9/11 attack every two years.



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