

THE WHITE HOUSE

The Threat of Carbon Pollution: California

We have a moral obligation to leave our children a planet that's not polluted or damaged, and by taking an all-of-the-above approach to develop homegrown energy and steady, responsible steps to cut carbon pollution, we can protect our kids' health and begin to slow the effects of climate change so we leave a cleaner, more stable environment for future generations. Climate change impacts including severe weather, asthma attacks, prolonged allergy seasons, and sea-level rise are affecting our security, our economy, and our communities. In 2012 alone, the cost of weather disasters exceeded \$110 billion in the United States, and climate change will only increase the frequency and intensity of these events. Today, we already set limits for arsenic, mercury and lead, but we impose no limits on how much carbon pollution our power plants release. Carbon pollution is contributing to a higher risk of asthma attacks and more frequent and severe storms, floods, heat waves, and wildfires, driving up food prices and threatening our communities. The President's plan is a comprehensive approach to cutting the pollution that causes climate change and threatens public health, setting us on a path to make our communities healthier, safer, and more resilient.

THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION AND EXTREME WEATHER IN CALIFORNIA

In 2011, power plants and major industrial facilities in California emitted more than 100 million metric tons of carbon pollution—metric tons of carbon pollution—that's equal to the yearly pollution from more than 21 million cars.

Recent incidents provide a reminder of the impacts to our public health and costs due to extreme weather in California. Although we cannot say that climate change is responsible for any individual event, climate change is already increasing our risks from these events.

- A dry winter in 2011-12 meant that the snow pack, which provides critical drinking water and water to irrigate farmland, was the third lowest on record in the West.
- In California, there were over 32,700 hospital admissions for asthma in 2011, with an average charge of over \$35,800 for each stay.
- In 2009, there were 4,073 emergency room visits in California due to heat stress.
- Changing temperature and precipitation patterns can affect the life cycle and distribution of insects, many of which transmit disease that already pose problems to public health in California. In 2010, there were 126 cases of Lyme disease in the state.

ANTICIPATED CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Temperatures in the Southwest are increasing more quickly than in other regions of the United States as a result of climate change. These increases can have important impacts on human health, particularly in cities, where 90 percent of the region's population lives. Decreases in air quality during heat waves, for example, can worsen the effects of respiratory illnesses and heart disease; high temperatures also increase the risk of heat stress. Even small increases in temperature can dry soils and vegetation, increasing the risk of wildfires. In 2012, wildfires burned 9.2 million acres across eight states, reducing air quality, damaging property and costing more than \$1 billion. Water resources, already over-tapped in many areas, will become even scarcer as a result of increased evaporation and snowmelt caused by higher

temperatures, affecting agriculture, hydroelectric power plants, and water availability in growing cities such as Phoenix and Las Vegas. This will also reduce groundwater recharge, which, combined with heavy groundwater pumping, will lower water tables and limit water availability and make it harder to support the Southwest region's cities and agricultural production. Although water scarcity will increase, the Southwest will also see increased frequency and altered timing of flooding because of increased intensity of rainfalls when they do occur, leading to increased risks to people, natural resources, and infrastructure.

CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION AND INCREASING RESILIENCE IN CALIFORNIA

Climate change is a long-term problem, but we can make substantial progress through a series of steady and responsible steps. The President's plan builds from progress already underway to work with states, local communities, and the private sector to reduce carbon pollution and to prepare our Nation for the impacts that cannot be avoided. Since 2009, President Obama has taken a number of common sense measures to combat carbon pollution, including:

- ***Investing in Clean Energy:*** During the President's first term, the United States more than doubled its use of renewable energy from wind, solar, and geothermal sources. In California, renewable energy generation from these sources increased more than 20 percent. Since 2009, the Administration has supported tens of thousands of renewable energy projects throughout the country, including more than 36,000 in California, generating enough energy to power nearly 720,000 homes and helping California meet its own goal of generating 33 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.
- ***Improving Efficiency:*** Using less energy to power our homes, businesses and vehicles is critical to building a clean and secure energy future. President Obama has made essential investments in research and development for energy efficiency advances, and set new standards to make the things we use every day – from cars to microwaves – more efficient.
 - President Obama established the toughest fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles in U.S. history. These standards will double the fuel efficiency of our cars and trucks by 2025, saving the average driver more than \$8,000 over the lifetime of a 2025 vehicle and cutting carbon pollution.
 - Since October 2009, the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have jointly completed energy upgrades in more than one million homes across the country, saving many families more than \$400 on their heating and cooling bills in the first year alone.
 - As part of the President's Better Buildings Challenge, the cities of Los Angeles and Sacramento committed to reducing energy in their city-owned buildings intensity 20 percent by 2020, covering 30 million square feet in L.A. and 12 million square feet in Sacramento. Placer County committed its 5 million square feet of city buildings to the same goal. University of California-Irvine, a 7 million square foot campus, reduced its energy intensity 8.8 percent by 2012.
- ***Preparing Communities for the Consequences of Climate Change:*** The Obama Administration has worked since its earliest days to strengthen the Nation's resilience to climate change impacts, including investing in critical science and tools, developing the first-ever Federal agency climate adaptation plans, and directly partnering with communities. For example, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is supporting efforts in California to bring experts and resources together to better understand potential climate changes in California, predict and monitor health effects, identify the populations most vulnerable to these effects, and develop programs to protect the public's health.