

Clean Energy and Health

Switching to clean, renewable energy will allow the U.S. to generate electricity without adding pollution that harms Americans' health.



Burning fuels to produce electricity generates air pollution.

- Reliance on fuels such as coal, oil, natural gas, biomass and municipal solid waste to produce electricity in the United States generates a [significant share of the nation's air pollution](#).
- Decades of research shows that these pollutants trigger asthma attacks and heart attacks, cause cancer, and shorten lives, among many other health impacts. Children, older adults, people with lung disease, heart disease or diabetes, people with lower incomes—all face higher risk from breathing these pollutants.

Even fuels marketed as renewable can harm health when they are burned for electricity.

- Biomass, a category of fuel that includes wood products, agricultural residues or forest wastes, and potentially highly toxic construction and demolition waste, is often described as renewable.
- Municipal solid waste—garbage—is another potentially highly toxic fuel. Burning these substances to produce electricity fuels can emit recognized air pollutants, including particle pollution and other carcinogens, which cause premature death and [endanger health](#).

Switching to clean energy and using energy more efficiently reduces air pollution.

- Energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources are estimated to save some regions in the U.S. between [\\$5.7 million and \\$210 million in public health and climate benefits annually](#) from reducing the harmful emissions of fossil-fuel burning power plants.
- Using energy more efficiently can reduce air pollution. When less energy is used, power plants don't have to produce as much energy, so they burn less fuel. This decreases the harmful air pollution that burning those fuels spews into the air.



Fossil fuels contribute to climate change, which endangers human health.

- Extracting, processing and burning these fuels emits carbon dioxide and other pollutants that worsen climate change. Switching to cleaner energy sources and reducing energy demand are important ways the United States can fight [climate change, which threatens the health of Americans in many ways.](#)
- Warmer temperatures and changes in rain patterns make it more likely to have more intense and frequent wildfires. In addition to the direct threats to homes, wildfires are a source of particle pollution, which causes asthma attacks and heart attacks and can kill.

Clean, renewable energy is available now.

- The United States is already seeing tremendous growth of renewable energy sources – particularly solar and wind energy. Americans will continue to see clean energy become more accessible.
- Use of clean, renewable energy is growing at the state level.
 - For example:
 - Wind electric power generation in Montana [grew by 12% in 2014](#) and supplied 6.5% of the state’s net electricity generation. Montana has the perfect setting to expand the state’s use of solar and wind to produce electricity and power its homes and workplaces.

For more information

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December 8, 2016