

# Under Attack: Vital Clean Air Safeguards

EPA Administrator Zeldin's plans will put lives at risk and cost trillions of dollars.

Updated July 2025

## Major Environmental Protections at Risk:

Administrator Zeldin's EPA is reversing course on nine major clean air protections. Losing these standards would, cumulatively by 2055:

- Produce more than **18 billion metric tons of climate pollution** – nearly 3 times the annual emissions from the entire U.S. today
- Result in **184,000 premature deaths**
- Lead to over **40 million missed work and school days**
- Deliver net costs between **\$3.7 and \$4.3 trillion**

## BACKGROUND

In March 2025, EPA Administrator Zeldin unveiled plans to dismantle dozens of the nation's most successful and vital air pollution protections. In addition to plans to strip away bedrock protections like the 2009 finding that greenhouse gases endanger human health and welfare, Administrator Zeldin is targeting major regulations finalized between 2021-2024 that would drive down pollution, save hundreds of thousands of lives, and provide trillions of dollars of benefits to Americans.

EPA has already proposed rules that would repeal standards for carbon pollution and toxic emissions from power plants. Proposals to rescind EPA's foundational Endangerment Finding, motor vehicle rules, and certain aspects of oil and gas methane standards are currently under or have recently cleared review by the White House, the last step before public release.

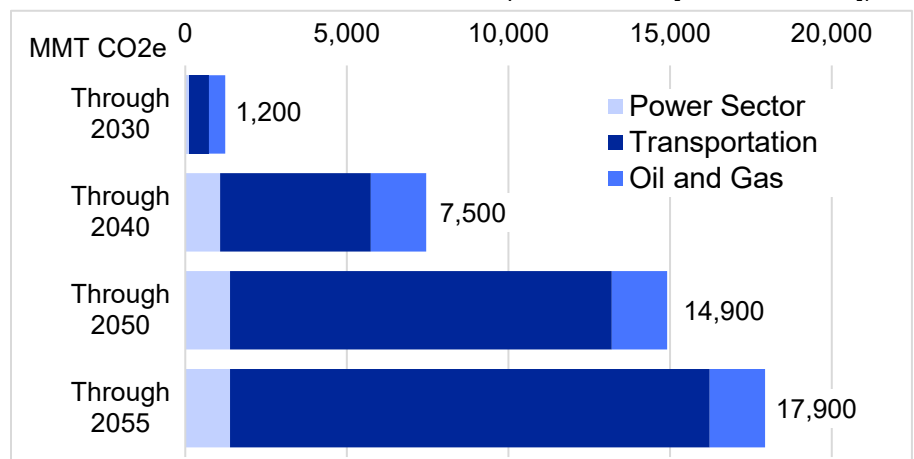
The stakes for climate, public health, and American jobs are significant. This report analyzes the emissions increases, health harms, and lost monetized benefits of 9 major clean air related standards that Administrator Zeldin is poised to weaken or eliminate.

## POLLUTION IMPACTS

The 9 actions<sup>1</sup> this report addresses span three major pollution sources: Transportation, Power, and Oil & Gas.

As shown in Figure 1, undoing these rules would significantly increase climate pollution – **7.5 billion metric tons** by 2040 and more than **18 billion metric tons** by 2055. This is equivalent to nearly 3 times the annual emissions from the entire U.S. today.

**Figure 1: Cumulative Carbon Pollution Increases if Major Clean Air Standards Reversed** (Source: EPA [100-GWP AR5])



<sup>1</sup> EPA Mercury and Air Toxics Standards for Power Plants; EPA New Gas and Existing Coal GHG Standards; EPA Good Neighbor Plan for 2015 Ozone; EPA Heavy-Duty NOx standards for MY27 and later vehicles; EPA Light-Duty GHG Standards, MY23-26; EPA Heavy-Duty GHG Standards, MY27-32; EPA Light/Medium-Duty Multipollutant Standards, MY27-32; EPA Methane Standards for New and Existing Oil and Gas Sources; EPA Methane Waste Emission Charge; and Particulate Matter NAAQS.

Collectively, by 2055, the U.S. would also see a substantial increase of health-harming pollution:

- **660,000 – 890,000 tons** of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)
- **9.3 million** tons of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)
- **300,000 tons** of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)
- **21 million tons** of volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

HEALTH HARMS

To quantify the health harms that would result from Administrator Zeldin’s attacks on these vital safeguards, we applied [national incidence-per-ton factors](#) to the different source categories. This resulted in changes in health outcomes for each emission source for each rule. For more discussion, see the [methodology](#) document.

We estimate that Administrator Zeldin repealing the 9 clean air protections at risk would result in an additional:

- **184,000** premature deaths
- **280,000** hospital and ER visits
- **112 million** asthma attacks
- **40 million** lost workdays and school absences

Table 1: Cumulative Health Harms from Undoing Major Clean Air Standards Under Threat

Sector	Premature deaths	Hospital and ER visits	Cases of asthma symptoms (million)	Lost work / school days (million)
Power	40,000	60,000	25	8.7
Transportation	88,000	160,000	72	26
Oil and Gas	3,200	8,000	4.3	1.6
PM <sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS	23,000 - 90,000	19,000 - 71,000	3.3 - 16	1.2 - 5.8
TOTAL	150,000-220,000	250,000-300,000	104 - 117	38 - 42

Table 1 shows these health impacts by sector.

Table 2: Monetized Harms From Undoing Major Clean Air Standards (BILLION 2022\$)

Sector	Years	Health Costs	Climate Costs	Net Costs
Power	2023-2047	\$377	\$324	\$662
Transportation	2023-2055	\$575	\$1,970	\$2,894
Oil and Gas	2024-2038	\$8	\$125	\$111
PM <sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS	2032-2051	\$637	\$0	\$629
TOTAL		\$960 to \$1,597	\$2,419	\$3,667 to \$4,296

MONETIZED HARMS FROM ZELDIN PLAN

In their extensive assessment of regulatory actions, agencies quantify the costs and benefits, including compliance costs, health impacts, climate impacts, and fuel and maintenance costs or savings for consumers. Table 2 shows the costs Americans will bear if the major clean air standards assessed here are repealed. By 2055, the U.S. would incur between **\$3.7 and \$4.3 trillion** in net costs, including at least \$1 trillion in health costs and \$2.4 trillion in climate costs. The estimate is in present value

and uses either a 2% or 3% discount rate depending on what value was used by the agency in its analysis.

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## HAZARDOUS AIR POLLUTION

Between 2021-2024, EPA finalized new cost-effective standards to reduce hazardous air pollutant (HAP) emissions from nine industries. HAPs include dozens of toxic pollutants that are dangerous to human health at any level including mercury, arsenic, benzene, and more. Many are carcinogenic and cause significant harm to developing fetuses and children. Combined, EPA estimates these standards would reduce hazardous air pollution from impacted facilities by **17 million pounds per year**.

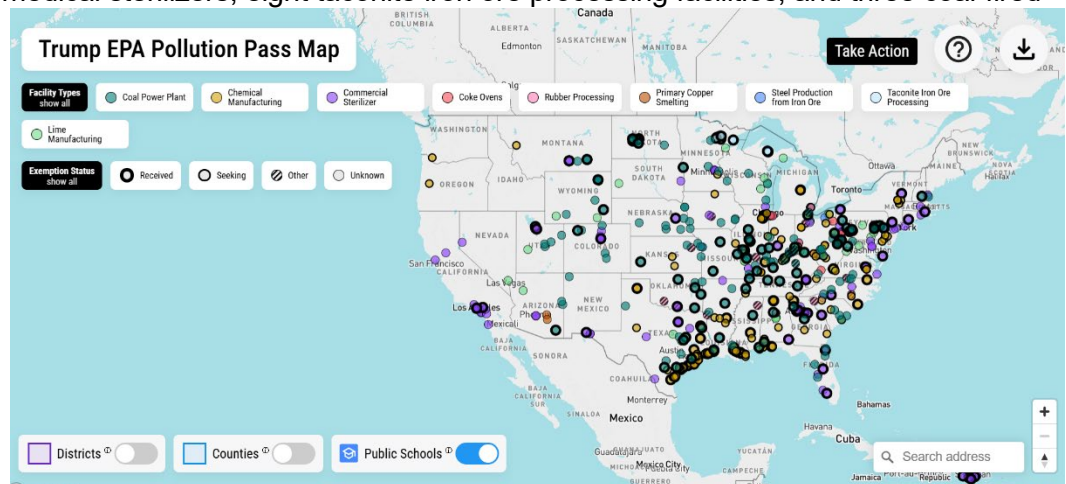
The nine industries covered by the recent standards include:

- Coal power plants
- Chemical manufacturing
- Commercial sterilizers
- Coke ovens
- Steel production
- Rubber processing
- Taconite iron ore processing
- Lime manufacturing
- Copper smelting

Zeldin's EPA and the Trump Administration have already begun their assault on these critical health protections. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, Administrator Zeldin [launched a website](#) inviting the 500-plus industrial sources covered by nine different rules to seek two-year extensions to their deadlines to comply with critical air toxics standards. The website encouraged the "regulated community" to apply for special Presidential exemptions from standards that protect people from toxic and hazardous air pollution and included step-by-step instructions on how to request one.

President Trump has now issued two sets of proclamations exempting polluters from complying with standards for two years with little public explanation: 68 coal-fired power plants on April 8<sup>th</sup> and on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 52 chemical manufacturing facilities, 39 medical sterilizers, eight taconite iron ore processing facilities, and three coal-fired power plants.

EDF and partner groups have released a [map](#) that plots all of the 500-plus facilities and allows communities to see which facilities are near them, whether they have asked for or received an exemption, and learn about their emissions and compliance history.



For several of the industries including [steel](#) and [coke ovens](#), EPA delayed the compliance dates on vital clean air protections without any public input.

For additional information, see [Methodology and Detailed Results](#).

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