

EPA: Clean-air rule would overturn Bush-era plan

July 6 2010, By MATTHEW DALY , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- The Obama administration is proposing new rules to tighten restrictions on pollution from coal-burning power plants in the eastern half of the country, a key step to cut emissions that cause smog.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) said the new rules would cut [sulfur dioxide](#) emissions by 71 percent from 2005 levels by 2014 and nitrogen oxide emissions by 52 percent in the same time frame.

The regulation, known as the Clean Air Interstate Rule, requires 31 states from Massachusetts to Texas to reduce emissions that contribute to smog and soot and can travel long distances in the wind. The agency predicted the rule would prevent about 14,000 to 36,000 premature deaths a year.

The rule would overturn and toughen rules issued during the administration of former President George W. Bush.

A [federal judge](#) threw out the Bush rule in 2008, but an appeals court later reinstated it, while ordering the EPA to make changes that better explain how the rule protects public health.

More than a dozen states, along with environmental groups, sued the EPA several year ago, contending that the Bush administration ignored science and its own experts when it decided in 2006 not to lower the nearly decade-old soot standard.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the rule signed Tuesday should improve air quality and public health in a broad swath of states, from New England down to Florida, over to Texas and up to Minnesota.

"We're working to limit pollution at its source, rather than waiting for it to move across the country," Jackson said in a statement.

The proposed reductions should save more than \$120 billion a year in avoided health costs and sick days and save thousands of lives each year, Jackson said. Those benefits would far outweigh the estimated \$2.8 billion annual cost of compliance, she said.

Environmental groups hailed the new rule as a step toward taming pollution from coal-fired [power plants](#) and solving the problem of one state's emissions harming residents in other states.

But industry groups said it will boost power prices and force many older coal-fired power plants to be closed.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., said the new rule will clean the air in Delaware and other Eastern states.

"As those of us who live in Delaware and other so-called "tail pipe" states on the East Coast know all too well, [air pollution](#) knows no boundaries," Carper said.

Even as Delaware has worked to clean its air, "pollution from neighboring states has adversely affected the health of Delawareans for too long just by virtue of our location," he said.

Still, Carper called the new regulation complicated and open to further lawsuits, which would likely cause even more delays in meeting public health targets.

He said the rule underscores the need for Congress to pass strong air pollution legislation this year.

Jeff Holmstead, a former EPA official who authored the original interstate rule, said it was not clear whether utilities will be able meet the new standards while still providing affordable and reliable electric power.

More information:

<http://www.epa.gov/airtransport/pdfs/FactsheetTR7-6-10.pdf>

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