

# US to reimpose limits on power plants' mercury emissions

February 1 2022

---

The US government announced Monday it wants to revive a regulation limiting air emissions of mercury and other toxic substances from fossil fuel-fired power plants that had been undermined by the previous administration.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "is proposing to reaffirm that it is appropriate and necessary to regulate emissions of hazardous air pollutants from coal- and oil-fired [power plants](#)," the agency said in a statement.

In May 2020, under former US president Donald Trump's administration, the phrase "appropriate and necessary" had been removed, thus nullifying the application of a regulation called the Mercury and Air Toxic Standards (MATS).

MATS was first introduced in 2011 under then-president Barack Obama, with whom current US leader Joe Biden worked as vice president.

MATS regulates mercury emissions levels, which scientists have linked to effects on the [nervous system](#), especially in children.

"Controlling these emissions improves [public health](#) for all Americans by reducing fatal heart attacks, reducing cancer risks, avoiding neurodevelopmental delays in children," the EPA said in a statement.

Before taking effect, the agency's proposal will first undergo a

mandatory period of public debate.

The current emissions standards will initially remain unchanged, but the EPA is considering making them "more stringent."

The EPA's announcement comes as Biden's environmental reform plan remains stalled in Congress, despite months of negotiations.

Since taking office, Biden has made fighting climate change a priority for his administration.

"Good news! @EPA is fixing another Trump-era problem," the Environmental Defense Fund NGO said on Twitter.

The decision by Trump's government was "based on an egregious manipulation of science to favor polluters," said Julie McNamara, the deputy policy director for the Climate and Energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, another NGO.

But "while today's proposal is vital, it's only a start," McNamara said. "We strongly support the EPA not just upholding but strengthening these rules."

© 2022 AFP

Citation: US to reimpose limits on power plants' mercury emissions (2022, February 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-02-reimpose-limits-power-mercury-emissions.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.