



Study: Reducing emissions would save 'thousands of lives' and 'billions of dollars'

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Reducing carbon emissions as spelled out in the recent Paris climate agreement would prevent "hundreds of thousands of premature deaths" and save "billions of dollars" in the U.S. alone, according to a study published Monday.

The nearly 300,000 deaths over the next 15 years would be prevented by reducing air pollution, which can lead to heart attacks, lung cancer or other respiratory illnesses, the study said.

"Many people view climate change as a future problem, but our analysis shows that reducing emissions that cause warming — many of which also contribute to air pollution — would benefit public health here and now," said study lead author Drew T. Shindell, a professor of climate sciences at Duke University.

The paper appeared in the peer-reviewed British journal *Nature Climate Change*.

By 2030, clean energy policies could prevent about 175,000 premature deaths (with about 22,000 fewer each year after 2030) while clean transportation could prevent about 120,000 premature deaths (and about 14,000 annually thereafter), the study said.

National economic benefits are valued at about \$250 billion per year.

"Burning fossil fuels in power plants, industry and motor vehicles is the main source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions," Shindell said. "Air pollution linked mostly to these same sources is also the leading environmental cause of premature death worldwide. By curbing their emissions, you score on two fronts."

To come up with the projected savings, the study used computer simulations of future greenhouse gas emissions and the already-established effect of air pollution.

When the worldwide health and climate impacts of the reduced emissions are both factored in, the value of the long-term benefits could roughly quintuple, becoming 5 to 10 times larger than the costs, the study said.

The study notes, however, that the U.S. will have to go far beyond its current planned reductions in energy and transportation emissions to achieve the goal.

The U.S. would need to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by a whopping 40% by 2030, as compared with 2005 levels, according to the study.

Chip Knappenberger from the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute, a libertarian thinktank, countered that the vast bulk of the health benefits from reducing greenhouse gas emissions as mentioned in the study would not come from reducing greenhouse gas emissions — but rather from air-quality improvements, most of which do not stem from climate-change mitigation.

He added there's little reduction in air pollution that is a direct result of reduced greenhouse gas emissions.