

Fact Sheet: The Clean Air Act

The Clean Air Act is a federal law that prevents asthma attacks, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations, protects lung health, and saves lives.

The Clean Air Act, enacted in 1970, is one of the nation's most successful public health laws.

- The Clean Air Act gives the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority and responsibility to reduce air pollution that puts health at risk.
- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to follow current science to adopt and enforce health-protective policies that reduce air pollution, improve public health, and save lives.
- Under the Clean Air Act, EPA sets regulations that put limits on outdoor air pollution. Some regulations require specific sources of pollution – like power plants or industrial facilities – to cut their emissions. Others require manufacturers to make their new products – like vehicles or appliances – less polluting. And still others require states to monitor their air quality and put a community-wide cleanup plan in place if the overall levels of air pollution are found to be unhealthy.
- The Clean Air Act works. In a [peer-reviewed study on the benefits and costs of the Clean Air Act](#), EPA found that steps taken under the Act would prevent 230,000 premature deaths in the year 2020 alone.
- Clean air protections are a smart investment. The study also showed that benefits of Clean Air Act protections outweigh costs by a factor of more than 30 to one, ensuring longer lives with avoided medical expenses, and better health and productivity for American workers.





Many communities are still breathing unhealthy air.

- Since 1970, the nation [has cut the most widespread air pollutants](#) by 78 percent. Still, the American Lung Association's "[State of the Air](#)" 2022 found that more than four in ten people Americans - over 137 million people - live in counties where they are exposed to dangerous levels of ozone and particle pollution. Over the past three years, Americans experienced more days of "very unhealthy" and "hazardous" air quality than ever before in the two-decade history of the "State of the Air" reports.
- Many communities, especially those near highways, power plants, ports and other sources of pollution, are still waiting for clean ambient air. [People of color are disproportionately affected](#). "[State of the Air](#)" found that people of color are 3 times as likely as white people to live in an area with at least one failing grade for air quality.
- Climate change is making air quality worse. Climate change is driving more frequent and severe wildfires, which creates upticks in dangerous smoke, and is leading to increased numbers of high ozone days.

The Clean Air Act and its protections must not be weakened.

- To ensure that all Americans breathe healthy air, all provisions of the Clean Air Act must be fully implemented and enforced.
- EPA must set stronger limits on all criteria and hazardous air pollutants and greenhouse gases. This includes setting tougher emissions standards for mobile and stationary sources, measures to reduce methane pollution from the oil and gas sector and other industries, and measures to regulate carbon pollution from power plants and other major sources.
- The Clean Air Act must not be weakened. Any legislation that blocks, delays or weakens EPA's authority to address air pollution, including climate change, will endanger public health.

For more information

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