

The Greenhouse Gas Emission Debacle

The Clean Air Act of 1970 is a key piece of legislation that spurred a nation-wide movement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Designed to target six specific groups of atmospheric chemicals, the policies outlined in the Clean Air Act (CAA) are instrumental in analyzing atmospheric pollution and mitigating global climate change. By restricting the emittance of criteria pollutants such as carbon dioxide, emissions from cars and industrial sources have reduced by 50% or more since 1970.

In recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken a number of specific actions to reduce greenhouse gases. To address mobile sources of greenhouse gases, the EPA has co-sponsored a new rule to reduce carbon intensity and increase fuel efficiency of all road-bound vehicles. The EPA has also outlined a strategy to reduce methane, ozone and the resulting smog that so frequently hangs over American cities. Furthermore, the EPA provides and participates in a variety of partnership programs aimed at guiding organizations throughout the country towards meeting environmental regulations.

Perhaps the most significant impact that the EPA can make on greenhouse gas emissions lies in their Clean Power Plan (CPP). This plan aims to develop carbon emittance regulations for American power plants, both new and existing. It recognizes the need for affordable and reliable energy systems but implores the urgency for reducing carbon emission levels, citing environmental, financial and health-related benefits for doing so. Each state will be handed an individual carbon emissions goal (determined based on a multitude of state-specific factors, such as power availability) and will be expected to meet this goal by 2030. The hallmark feature of the CPP is flexibility; states will be able to implement designs that work best for them on a time frame that allows for infrastructure development.