

On April 25, 2024, the EPA announced four new rules aimed at reducing toxic pollutants from power plants. Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action (MiCCA) is grateful to President Biden and EPA Administrator Regan for championing this comprehensive set of standards designed to safeguard our air, health, and environment.

The suite of final rules, addressing carbon pollution, mercury and air toxins, coal ash, and wastewater, marks a significant stride forward in safeguarding the health of our communities. Key provisions include:

- Requiring all coal-fired plants intending long-term operation and all new baseload gas-fired plants to slash their carbon pollution by 90%.
- Strengthening and updating the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) for coal-fired power plants, tightening emissions standards for toxic metals by 67%, and establishing a 70% reduction in emissions standards for mercury from existing lignite-fired sources.
- Reducing pollutants discharged through wastewater from coal-fired power plants by over 660 million pounds annually.
- Mandating the safe management of coal ash in areas previously unregulated at the federal level.

These standards are imperative to addressing the pollution that has disproportionately affected communities living in close proximity to fossil fuel emissions for far too long. Mercury pollution and other harmful power plant emissions exacerbate various diseases, including asthma and heart disease, some cancers, developmental delay in children, and even contribute to premature death, while toxic coal ash can contaminate waterways and groundwater.

Dr. Lisa Del Buono, head of Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action, emphasizes, “Fossil fuel pollution is detrimentally impacting Michigan residents today. These new standards represent a crucial step forward in safeguarding the health of disproportionately affected communities like Detroiters who are hospitalized for asthma at least four times as frequently as Michigan residents as a whole.”

While there remains much to be done to shield human health from fossil fuel pollution, MiCCA applauds the administration’s leadership and urges decision-makers and political leaders to uphold these rules and promote additional policies to ensure a stable climate, healthy air, and clean water for all communities.