

## THE WHITE HOUSE

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### **The Threat of Carbon Pollution: Texas**

We have a moral obligation to leave our children a planet that's not polluted or damaged, and by taking an all-of-the-above approach to develop homegrown energy and steady, responsible steps to cut carbon pollution, we can protect our kids' health and begin to slow the effects of climate change so we leave a cleaner, more stable environment for future generations. Climate change impacts including severe weather, asthma attacks, prolonged allergy seasons, and sea-level rise are affecting our security, our economy, and our communities. In 2012 alone, the cost of weather disasters exceeded \$110 billion in the United States, and climate change will only increase the frequency and intensity of these events. Today, we already set limits for arsenic, mercury and lead, but we impose no limits on how much carbon pollution our power plants release. Carbon pollution is contributing to a higher risk of asthma attacks and more frequent and severe storms, floods, heat waves, and wildfires, driving up food prices and threatening our communities. The President's plan is a comprehensive approach to cutting the pollution that causes climate change and threatens public health, setting us on a path to make our communities healthier, safer, and more resilient.

#### **THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION AND EXTREME WEATHER IN TEXAS**

In 2011, power plants and major industrial facilities in Texas emitted more than 405 million metric tons of carbon pollution—that's equal to the yearly pollution from more than 84.8 million cars.

Recent incidents provide a reminder of the impacts to our public health and costs due to extreme weather in Texas. Although we cannot say that climate change is responsible for any individual event, climate change is already increasing our risks from these events.

- In 2011, Texas was hit by eight of the nation's billion dollar disasters - the most of any state in the country. Of the eight, the three most devastating were drought, heat, and wildfires.
- Texas experienced its hottest summer on record in 2011, with record-breaking numbers of days over 100°F. In Texas and Oklahoma, a majority of range and pastures were classified in "very poor" condition for much of the 2011 crop growing season.
- In 2011, more than 1,500 people lost their homes in Texas's most destructive wildfire. 2012 was the second hottest summer on record. And, over the past 10 years, Texas has been impacted by more than 20 one-billion dollars weather and climate disasters.

#### **ANTICIPATED CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS IN THE GREAT PLAINS**

Climate change has increased temperatures across the Great Plains since the 1960s, particularly in the northern states. The hotter, drier conditions are already contributing to water resource stress, particularly in the southern portion of the region. In the coming decades, lack of water will constrain development, stress natural resources, and increase competition for water among communities, agriculture, energy production, and wildlife and natural ecosystems. In 2011, heat and drought contributed to agricultural losses across the Midwest and Great Plains, and the northern Great Plains dealt with significant flooding. Extreme events like floods and droughts are expected to become more common with climate change. Other agricultural impacts of rising temperatures include changes in insect pests and the northward shift of optimal zones for crops. As young adults move out of small, rural communities, the towns are increasingly populated by a vulnerable demographic of very old and very

young people, placing them more at risk for health issues than urban communities. Serious health concerns are also associated with severe flooding, projected to increase in the future, including greater incidence of waterborne diseases. Water quantity and quality issues are expected to exacerbate existing economic and social issues for the 65 Native American tribes in the Great Plains, where populations on rural tribal lands have limited capacities to respond to climate change.

## CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION AND INCREASING RESILIENCE IN TEXAS

Climate change is a long-term problem, but we can make substantial progress through a series of steady and responsible steps. The President's plan builds from progress already underway to work with states, local communities, and the private sector to reduce carbon pollution and to prepare our Nation for the impacts that cannot be avoided. Since 2009, President Obama has taken a number of common sense measures to combat carbon pollution, including:

- ***Investing in Clean Energy:*** During the President's first term, the United States more than doubled its use of renewable energy from wind, solar, and geothermal sources. In Texas, renewable energy generation from these sources increased more than 100 percent. Since 2009, the Administration has supported tens of thousands of renewable energy projects throughout the country, including more than 610 in Texas, generating enough energy to power nearly 640,000 homes and helping Texas meet its own goal of generating 5,880 MW of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2015.
- ***Improving Efficiency:*** Using less energy to power our homes, businesses and vehicles is critical to building a clean and secure energy future. President Obama has made essential investments in research and development for energy efficiency advances, and set new standards to make the things we use every day – from cars to microwaves – more efficient.
  - President Obama established the toughest fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles in U.S. history. These standards will double the fuel efficiency of our cars and trucks by 2025, saving the average driver more than \$8,000 over the lifetime of a 2025 vehicle and cutting carbon pollution.
  - Since October 2009, the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have jointly completed energy upgrades in more than one million homes across the country, saving many families more than \$400 on their heating and cooling bills in the first year alone.
  - As part of the President's Better Buildings Challenge, Rochester, Houston, El Paso and Fort Worth committed to reducing energy intensity 20 percent by 2020 in a combined 38.2 million square feet of buildings. The Houston Independent School District committed a reduction of 30 percent by 2015 in 24 million square feet of schools.
- ***Preparing Communities for the Consequences of Climate Change:*** The Obama Administration has worked since its earliest days to strengthen the Nation's resilience to climate change impacts, including investing in critical science and tools, developing the first-ever Federal agency climate adaptation plans, and directly partnering with communities. For example, the Department of Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are launching a Western Watershed Enhancement Partnership, a cooperative effort in Western states, including Texas, to avoid damaging wildfires through upfront fire suppression projects, while also encouraging efficient water management.