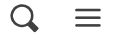


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2 minute read · May 20, 2021 10:12 AM PDT · Last Updated 2 years ago

Air pollution costs each American \$2,500 a year in healthcare - study

By Matthew Lavietes




The Rocky Mountains are pictured as a layer of air pollution hangs over Denver, Colorado, U.S. January 21, 2020. Picture taken January 21, 2020. REUTERS/Jim Urquhart



NEW YORK, May 20 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Air pollution from fossil fuels costs each American an average of \$2,500 a year in extra medical bills, researchers said on Thursday, as climate change hurts both health and finances.

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"The science is clear: the dangerous effects of climate change - and their profound costs to our health and our pocketbooks - will worsen each year we fail to curb the pollution," said the NDRC's Vijay Limaye.



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The report used data from several dozen scientific papers to tally the overall cost of a changing climate on U.S. health.

Heat waves, which can trigger strokes and exacerbate cardiovascular problems, cost the country \$263 million a year, the report found, with wildfire smoke costing Americans \$16 billion annually.

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A wildfire in Los Angeles this week has fueled fears that California's wildfire season is becoming longer. Five of the six largest wildfires in the state's history occurred last year.


Lyme disease and West Nile virus, more common with rising temperatures, contribute to roughly \$2 billion in health costs annually, the report found.

On Tuesday, scientists estimated that Hurricane Sandy, which pummeled New York City and much of the East Coast in 2012, caused \$63 billion in property damage, making it one of the most costly storms in U.S. history.

At a virtual conference, Limaye said he hoped to convince lawmakers that climate change was more expensive than inaction.

"We've written this report to help policymakers, health professionals...to recognize the profound suffering and expensive health costs that can be avoided by cutting climate pollution," Limaye said.

"A strong response to climate change is urgent and action is needed now."



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Reporting by Matthew Lavietes @mattlavietes; editing by Lyndsay Griffiths. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers the lives of people around the world who struggle to live freely or fairly. Visit <http://news.trust.org>



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