



## Minnesota Updates Cost of Air Pollution from Power Plants

*Updates Reflect Health Care Costs Caused by Pollution, Level the Playing Field for Homegrown Energy*

**SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA** – Today, in a victory for public health, clean air, and homegrown clean energy, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) updated calculations to reflect the true cost that air pollution imposes on Minnesotans. These new figures will be taken into account when considering plans for new power plants and will help level the playing field for Minnesota’s clean energy industry. Clean energy organizations Fresh Energy, the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and the Sierra Club, petitioned the PUC in 2013 to update these twenty year old costs, using the best available science.

“The PUC’s decision upholds Minnesota’s twenty-year, bipartisan consensus that we should consider the costs to human health created by air pollution and climate change that result from our energy decisions,” said Leigh Currie of Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, lead attorney for the clean energy organizations.

“Today, Minnesota adopted crucial updates that more accurately reflect the best science on the health and climate impacts of burning fossil fuels,” stated J. Drake Hamilton, Science Policy Director at Fresh Energy.

“Fossil fuel pollution takes a major toll on human and environmental health and today’s decision ensures that we are more accurately accounting for the true costs of our energy decisions,” said Jessica Tritsch, Senior Campaign Representative with the Sierra Club.

In 1993, the Minnesota Legislature required the PUC to incorporate the health and environmental cost of air pollution, including carbon dioxide, into their decisions on power plants. In 1997, PUC adopted a set of costs for six pollutants. Today, the PUC decided to use a range of carbon dioxide costs based on the federal “social cost of carbon,” with two modifications to the low end of the range. In addition, the PUC updated numbers for three other air pollutants, fine particulates, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide, resulting in significantly increased values. Today’s decision is the culmination of a four year process of fact-finding, research, and deliberation.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, clean energy organizations, clean energy businesses, and public health groups all argued for unmodified use of the federal “social cost of carbon.” The PUC found that the federal “social cost of carbon” was the best scientific estimate of the cost of climate change, but made changes to the “economic framing assumptions” used when making power plant decisions. The final result was a range of numbers very close to the position of Minnesota’s largest utility, Xcel Energy.

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