

U.S. emissions plummet to lowest levels in post-World War II era



New York, January 14 (RHC)-- United States greenhouse gas emissions fell 10.3 percent in 2020, the largest drop in emissions in the post-World War II era, as the coronavirus crippled the economy, according to a report released by the Rhodium Group.

The economic fallout from the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 — especially in big emitting sectors like transportation, power and industry — resulted in a sharper emissions drop than the 2009 recession, when emissions slid 6.3 percent.

The drop means that the U.S. would outperform its pledge made under the Copenhagen Accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Emissions will actually drop by 21.5 percent compared with 2005.

But the report's authors warned that the dip should not be seen as a guarantee that the US can easily meet its more ambitious pledge under the Paris Agreement to cut emissions 28 percent below 2005 levels

by 2025.

President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris climate accord, but President-elect Joe Biden has said he intends to rejoin as soon as he is inaugurated on January 20. He plans to set the country on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050, but will first need to announce a target for reducing emissions by 2030.

“With coronavirus vaccines now in distribution, we expect economic activity to pick up again in 2021, but without meaningful structural changes in the carbon intensity of the US economy, emissions will likely rise again as well,” the report by the research group said.

Leading the decline was the transportation sector, which saw a sharp emissions drop of 14.7 percent from 2019 levels as travel diminished, especially at the start of the pandemic last March, the report said.

Power plant emissions saw the second-largest decline, dropping 10.3 percent below 2019 levels, driven by retirements of coal-fired power plants and a general decline in electricity demand due to the economic damage from the pandemic, the report said.

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