

Study shows three Americans create enough carbon emissions to kill one person

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The lifestyles of around three average Americans will create enough planet-heating emissions to kill one person, according to a study. (Photo via The Guardian)

Washington, July 31 (RHC)-- The lifestyles of about three average Americans will create enough carbon emissions to kill one person, shows the first analysis to calculate the mortal cost of carbon emissions.

The new research builds upon the “social cost of carbon,” which is a monetary figure placed upon the damage caused by each ton of carbon dioxide emitted, through evaluating an expected death toll from the emissions that are responsible for the climate crisis.

The study, published in Nature Communications on Thursday, also shows the amount of carbon a single coal-fired power plant emits is likely to result in over 900 deaths. For every 4,434 metric tons of CO₂ emitted beyond the 2020 rate of emissions, one person globally will die prematurely as a result of the increased temperature, according to the analysis, which shows this further CO₂ is equivalent to the current lifetime emissions of 3.5 Americans.

Adding an additional 4m metric tons above last year’s level, produced by the average U.S. coal plant, will kill 904 people worldwide by the end of the century, the research found. On a grander scale, removing planet-heating emissions by 2050 would help prevent deaths of an expected 74 million people around the world this century.

Daniel Bressler of Columbia University’s Earth Institute, who wrote the paper, said, “There are a significant number of lives that can be saved if you pursue climate policies that are more aggressive than the business as usual scenario.”

“I was surprised at how large the number of deaths are. There is some uncertainty over this, the number could be lower but it could also be a lot higher.”

The paper, which also compared carbon emissions in different countries, shows while it takes only 3.5 Americans to create enough emissions in a lifetime to kill a person, it would take 25 Brazilians or 146 Nigerians to do the same.

Recent wildfires and a dramatic heatwave have badly affected the US Pacific north-west, where high temperature in Seattle and Portland caused hundreds of people to die. Scientists argue the climate crisis, driven by carbon emissions, is making heatwaves in the US and some other countries much more frequent and severe.

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