

New Poll Finds Most Americans Worried EPA Regulations Will Lead to Higher Electricity Prices

Most consumers also concerned EPA policies will lead to black-outs and brown-outs

Washington, D.C. – Most Americans (76%) are at least somewhat worried that new regulations proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to remove coal-powered electricity from the nation's energy mix will lead to higher prices for consumers, according to an online survey of 2,058 adults conducted in April, 2014 by Harris Poll on behalf of the National Mining Association (NMA). The national poll also reveals that concern is greatest (88%) among retirees and these are people living on fixed incomes who are particularly sensitive to cost increases.

The survey highlights the very real impact the winter price surge had on household finances and quality of life. Of the 76% of Americans responsible for paying their utility bills and who had higher bills this winter over half (56%) said their day-to-day lives were impacted with these higher bills this winter. For example, those impacted said they were forced to set thermostats lower than was comfortable (32%) and forced to cut back on leisure activities (28%). Nearly one fifth (19%) also reported that higher electricity costs limited their ability to buy necessities, such as groceries, food and healthcare – suggesting lower-income households may have been forced to decide between heating their home and eating a meal.

“Americans are rightfully concerned about higher electricity prices. If EPA continues to push forward with unrealistic standards for coal-based power plants, consumers' fears will become locked-in for the foreseeable future,” Hal Quinn, NMA president and CEO, said. “The leap in electricity bills consumers saw this winter is as much the result of EPA's policies as it is the cold weather.”

According to NMA data, EPA's far-reaching regulations will result in over 20 percent of the country's coal-powered electricity – the nation's largest component of electricity generation – being

removed from the energy grid by 2020 if not sooner, which puts greater price pressure on natural gas and alternative fuels to fill the gap.

“Unfortunately less diversity of our power resources will endanger utilities' ability to provide a reliable supply of energy at the lowest cost to consumers,” Quinn said.

According to the survey, 70 percent of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that new EPA regulations to eliminate coal-powered electricity from the nation's energy mix, if approved, will also lead to electricity black-outs and brown-outs this summer.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission acting Chair Cheryl LaFleur said at the agency's April 1, 2014 technical conference on the winter's effects on regional transmission organizations' markets and operations that on some days this past winter, the energy grid was “pushed to the edge,” jeopardizing the ability to provide uninterrupted electricity to Americans in all regions of the country.

“This winter served as a warning about the importance of maintaining a diverse energy mix to fulfill the high demands we place on the nation's power supply,” Quinn said. “The EPA's power plants regulations have moved too far, too fast. We hope this survey demonstrates to policymakers that American families want and need the dependable, affordable electricity that EPA proposals currently threaten to remove.”

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online from April 8-10, 2014 among 2,058 U.S. adults (aged 18+) by Harris Poll on behalf of the National Mining Association. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For a copy of the executive summary or the full methodology, including weighting variables, please contact communications@nma.org.