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## China's Air Pollution Kills About 4,000 Every Day: Study

Air pollution is killing an average of 4,000 people a day in China, according to researchers who cited coal-burning as probably being the main cause.

Deaths related to the main pollutant, tiny particles known as PM2.5 that can trigger heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer and asthma, total 1.6 million a year, or 17 per cent of China's mortality level, according to the study by Berkeley Earth, an independent research group funded largely by educational grants. It was published on Thursday in the online peer-reviewed journal PLOS One from the Public Library of Science.

"When I was last in Beijing, pollution was at the hazardous level: Every hour of exposure reduced my life expectancy by 20 minutes," said scientific director of Berkeley Earth and a co-author of the paper Richard Muller in an e-mail. "It's as if every man, woman and child smoked 1.5 cigarettes each hour."



Atmospheric pollution in Beijing, China – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

The Chinese authorities have acknowledged the problem after heavy smog enveloped swathes of the nation in recent years. They have adopted air-quality standards, introduced monitoring stations and cleaner standards for transportation fuel while shutting coal plants and moving factories out of cities.

The PM2.5 concentrations far exceed standards, endangering people's health, though air quality has improved in the first half in the 358 Chinese cities," said climate and energy campaigner at Greenpeace East Asia Dong Liansai.

Mr. Muller and co-author Robert Rohde found that 92 per cent of China's population experienced at least 120 hours of unhealthy air during the 5<sup>th</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> August study period. For 38 percent of the population, the average pollution level across the whole four-month period was deemed unhealthy. The Berkeley Earth researchers also examined where pollutants were detected and found that the sources of PM2.5 matched those for sulfur dioxide, suggesting that most came from burning coal.

"Sources of pollution are widespread, but are particularly intense in a north-east corridor that extends from near Shanghai to the north of Beijing," the researchers wrote.

China gets about 64 per cent of its primary energy from coal, according to National Energy Administration data. To cut reliance on coal, the nation also wants to derive 20 percent of its energy from renewables and nuclear by 2030, almost double the current share.

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- Bloomberg, China's air pollution kills about 4,000 every day, *Today*, page 23, 15<sup>th</sup> August, Published by MediaCorp Press Ltd.