

The [Center for Health and the Global Environment](#) at Harvard Medical School has a new report sort of out on the life-cycle costs of coal production and combustion. I say “sort of” out because the only document I’ve been able to find is a [brief summary](#), without methods or references, posted by Ken Ward at the [Coal Tattoo](#) blog. The summary says that the full report “appears in the January 2011 issue of the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*,” but a search of the *Annals* did not turn it up. I will link the full study if and when I locate it.

The study aims to identify the life cycle impacts of coal, including but not limited to the economically quantifiable impacts. Those alone, according to the summary, are between \$175 and \$523 billion annually. If those costs were internalized in the market price of coal-generated electricity, they would add 9 to 27 cents per kilowatt hour, a significant amount considering the [average retail price of electricity](#) for residential users in the U.S. is about 11 or 12 cents per kwh.

This report is consistent with one [we blogged about two years ago](#) showing that the economic costs of coal production in Appalachia far outstripped its benefits. Its yet another reminder that the coal industry benefits from all sorts of subsidies, both seen and unseen (contrary to what West Virginia Senator [Joe Manchin recently claimed](#)). Until the users of coal actually have to pay all its costs, the unregulated market is not going to come close to generating the “right” amount of coal use.