



## **About CCI**

The Center for Climate Integrity empowers communities and elected officials to hold polluters accountable for their role in causing and lying about the climate crisis. Through campaigns, communications, and strategic legal support, we work to ensure that the fossil fuel industry pays their fair share for the massive costs of climate change.

## **What is climate liability?**

Climate liability reflects the legal principle that fossil fuel companies, like any other industry that knowingly caused harm to consumers and the public (i.e. big tobacco, opioids, lead, asbestos and more), should pay for the resulting damages. This means that the companies whose products led to climate change should help citizens with climate-related bills.

Internal documents show conclusively that big oil and gas companies knew burning fossil fuels [would lead to dangerous climate change as early as 1968](#). Instead of warning the public and taking action to curb the threat, they ran a massive, ongoing disinformation campaign that deliberately sowed doubt about scientific realities and downplayed risks. In October 2021, the [CEOs](#) of Exxon, Shell, BP America, Chevron, the American Petroleum Institute, and the Chamber of Commerce [testified](#) before Congress at a historic hearing on that disinformation. These executives are still arguing that their companies have no financial obligation — none — to pay for any of the damage caused by climate change or defenses needed to protect against it.

## **What counts as a climate cost?**

From severe weather recovery to the everyday effects of sea level rise and warming temperatures, communities across the country are already paying billions to protect themselves and their homes, businesses, infrastructure, and livelihoods from climate impacts. While fossil fuel companies continue to profit from the climate crisis, taxpayers bear the burden of its costs and consequences alone. Until these companies pay their fair share, communities will be forced to cut existing public services, raise taxes, or retreat and abandon property as the bill continues to grow.

In partnership with researchers from the University of Colorado, Boulder and engineering firm Resilient Analytics, the Center for Climate Integrity has conducted two climate cost accounting studies of its own: one calculating the cost of [constructing seawalls](#) to protect communities from sea level rise by 2040, and the other estimating the cost to [upgrade and install air conditioning](#) in public schools across the country to account for additional extreme heat days by 2025.

## **What are some paths toward climate liability?**

[Twenty six cities, counties and states and one trade industry](#) have already sued major fossil fuel companies for the costs associated with climate adaptation and resilience. The most direct path is for elected officials at the city, county or state level to consider taking fossil fuel companies to court to recover damages. But there are other ways to hold polluters accountable; for instance, local officials can begin by tracking climate costs at the city and county level in order to raise questions about who should pay, and can explore resolutions, policies and ballot initiatives that help shift the burden away from their constituents.