

EPA Suspends Environmental Law Enforcement For Coronavirus

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) might want to think about changing their name after telling companies on Thursday that the organization would not be enforcing penalties for noncompliance with routine monitoring and reporting. The EPA has suspended these obligations in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic.

EPA is committed to protecting human health and the environment, but recognizes challenges resulting from efforts to protect workers and the public from COVID-19 may directly impact the ability of regulated facilities to meet all federal regulatory requirements. This temporary policy is designed to provide enforcement discretion under the current, extraordinary conditions, while ensuring facility operations continue to protect human health and the environment."

Andrew Wheeler, EPA Administrator

While the EPA's announcement made it clear that this policy is temporary, this announcement will likely do more harm than good.

Air Pollution Affects Lung Health

The reduction in traffic and industrial activity due to coronavirus has been greatly reduced air pollution. In addition to the obvious benefits of that, the improved air quality can only benefit coronavirus outcomes. Air pollution is a significant respiratory irritant.

When something like fine particulate matter injures or

irritates the nerves in the respiratory tree, air passages that move air from outside into the lungs, they become inflamed and the fluid the body sends into the lungs. This fluid prevents the body from getting enough oxygen into the bloodstream, leading to severe pneumonia. This is one of the ways COVID-19 cases go from benign to serious illness.

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- *DOJ Wants to Suspend Certain Constitutional Rights Because of Coronavirus*
- *Does Elderberry Increase Risk Of Death With CoVID-19?*
- *Coronavirus – Your Guide to the CoVID-19 Pandemic*

The decision by the EPA to stop enforcing federal regulatory requirements due to this pandemic is ironic. The agency states that this is a temporary measure during the pandemic, but this move will increase air pollution during a pandemic that affects the lungs. The EPA has agreed to indirectly extend the pandemic.

Cynthia Giles, the former head of EPA office of enforcement during the Obama administration, condemned the news in a statement to The Hill.

This EPA statement is essentially a nationwide waiver of environmental rules for the indefinite future. It tells companies across the country that they will not face enforcement even if they emit unlawful air and water pollution in violation of environmental laws, so long as they claim that those failures are in some way 'caused' by the virus pandemic. And it allows them an out on monitoring too, so we may never know how bad the violating pollution was..."

The Hill

Sources:

- *What happens to people's lungs when they get coronavirus?* – The Guardian
- *Coronavirus pandemic leading to huge drop in air pollution* – The Guardian