

# Memo to EPA Employees

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 23, 2009

**TO:** All EPA Employees

**FROM:** Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator

I can think of no higher calling or privilege than rejoining EPA as your Administrator. I am grateful and humbled that President Obama has given me this honor. With his election and with my appointment, President Obama has dramatically changed the face of American environmentalism. With your help, we can now change the face of the environment as well.



During my 21 years in public service, I have witnessed firsthand the dedication and professionalism of EPA's workforce. Thousands of committed, hard-working and talented employees for whom protecting the environment is a calling, not just a job, have made EPA a driving force in environmental protection since 1970.

EPA can meet the nation's environmental challenges only if our employees are fully engaged partners in our shared mission. That's why I will make respect for the EPA workforce a bedrock principle of my tenure. I will look to you every day for ideas, advice and expertise. EPA should once again be the workplace of choice for veteran public servants and also talented young people beginning careers in environmental protection – just as it was for me when I first joined EPA shortly after graduate school.

In outlining his agenda for the environment, President Obama has articulated three values that he expects EPA to uphold. These values will shape everything I do.

Science must be the backbone for EPA programs. The public health and environmental laws that Congress has enacted depend on rigorous adherence to the best available science. The President believes that when EPA addresses scientific issues, it should rely on the expert judgment of the Agency's career scientists and independent advisors. When scientific judgments are suppressed, misrepresented or distorted by political agendas, Americans can lose faith in their government to provide strong public health and environmental protection.

The laws that Congress has written and directed EPA to implement leave room for policy judgments. However, policy decisions should not be disguised as scientific findings. I pledge that I will not compromise the integrity of EPA's experts in order to advance a preference for a particular regulatory outcome.

EPA must follow the rule of law. The President recognizes that respect for Congressional mandates and judicial decisions is the hallmark of a principled regulatory agency. Under our environmental laws, EPA has room to exercise discretion, and Congress has often looked to EPA to fill in the details of general policies. However, EPA needs to exercise policy discretion in good faith and in keeping with the directives of Congress and the courts. When Congress has been explicit, EPA cannot misinterpret or ignore the language Congress has used. When a court has determined EPA's responsibilities under our governing statutes, EPA cannot turn a blind eye to the court's decision or procrastinate in complying.

EPA's actions must be transparent. In 1983, EPA Administrator Ruckelshaus promised that EPA would operate "in a fishbowl" and "will attempt to communicate with everyone from the environmentalists to those we regulate, and we will do so as openly as possible."

I embrace this philosophy. Public trust in the Agency demands that we reach out to all stakeholders fairly and impartially, that we consider the views and data presented carefully and objectively, and that we fully disclose the information that forms the bases for our decisions. I pledge that we will carry out the work of the Agency in public view so that the door is open to all interested parties and that there is no doubt why we are acting and how we arrived at our decisions.

We must take special pains to connect with those who have been historically underrepresented in EPA decision making, including the disenfranchised in our cities and rural areas, communities of color, native Americans, people disproportionately impacted by pollution, and small businesses, cities and towns working to meet their environmental responsibilities. Like all Americans, they deserve an EPA with an open mind, a big heart and a willingness to listen.

As your Administrator, I will uphold the values of scientific integrity, rule of law and transparency every day. If ever you feel I am not meeting this commitment, I expect you to let me know.

Many vital tasks lie before us in every aspect of EPA's programs. As I develop my agenda, I will be seeking your guidance on the tasks that are most urgent in protecting public health and the environment and on the strategies that EPA can adopt to maximize our effectiveness and the expertise of our talented employees. At the outset, I would like to highlight five priorities that will receive my personal attention:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The President has pledged to make responding to the threat of climate change a high priority of his administration. He is confident that we can transition to a low-carbon economy while creating jobs and making the investment we need to emerge from the current recession and create a strong foundation for future growth. I share this vision. EPA will stand ready to help Congress craft strong, science-based climate legislation that fulfills the vision of the President. As Congress does its work, we will move ahead to comply with the Supreme Court's decision recognizing EPA's obligation to address climate change under the Clean Air Act.

- Improving air quality. The nation continues to face serious air pollution challenges, with large areas of the country out of attainment with air-quality standards and many communities facing the threat of toxic air pollution. Science shows that people's health is at stake. We will plug the gaps in our regulatory system as science and the law demand.
- Managing chemical risks. More than 30 years after Congress enacted the Toxic Substances Control Act, it is clear that we are not doing an adequate job of assessing and managing the risks of chemicals in consumer products, the workplace and the environment. It is now time to revise and strengthen EPA's chemicals management and risk assessment programs.
- Cleaning up hazardous-waste sites. EPA will strive to accelerate the pace of cleanup at the hundreds of contaminated sites across the country. Turning these blighted properties into productive parcels and reducing threats to human health and the environment means jobs and an investment in our land, our communities and our people.
- Protecting America's water. EPA will intensify our work to restore and protect the quality of the nation's streams, rivers, lakes, bays, oceans and aquifers. The Agency will make robust use of our authority to restore threatened treasures such as the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay, to address our neglected urban rivers, to strengthen drinking-water safety programs, and to reduce pollution from non-point and industrial dischargers.

As we meet these challenges, we must be sensitive to the burdens pollution has placed on vulnerable subpopulations, including children, the elderly, the poor and all others who are at particular risk to threats to health and the environment. We must seek their full partnership in the greater aim of identifying and eliminating the sources of pollution in their neighborhoods, schools and homes.

EPA's strength has always been our ability to adapt to the constantly changing face of environmental protection as our economy and society evolve and science teaches us more about how humans interact with and affect the natural world. Now, more than ever, EPA must be innovative and forward looking because the environmental challenges faced by Americans all across our country are unprecedented.

These challenges are indeed immense in scale and urgency. But, as President Obama said Tuesday, they will be met. I look forward to joining you at work on Monday to begin tackling these challenges together.