

The Environmental Pollution Agency Prioritizes Environmental Rollbacks While Dropping Environmental Enforcement | 1



The covid-19 epidemic is providing the Environmental Protection Agency with the perfect opportunity to demonstrate its priorities: full speed ahead with environmental roll backs, including greenhouse gas/fuel economy standards for cars, cutting back on the regulation of mercury from power plants, loosening regulations on coal ash from coal plants and more. Employees at EPA have [anonymously described](#) the “relentless pressure” they are facing from supervisors to issue the roll backs even as they are hunkered down at home because of the corona virus pandemic . An increasing number of EPA workers have tested positive for the virus, and of course others are saddled with the additional responsibilities of taking care of children full time while schools are closed.

Meanwhile, companies that pollute are receiving far more sympathetic treatment from EPA head Andrew Wheeler. In a just released [memo](#), and accompanying [announcement](#), EPA has made clear that it will not “seek penalties for noncompliance with routine monitoring and reporting obligations” due to the coronavirus pandemic. Not only that, the policy applies retroactively to March 13 and remains in effect until further notice. Companies who violate pollution laws need only claim that the non-compliance was in some way related to the outbreak of the disease. I understand the need for flexibility and compassion during the outbreak, but dropping all enforcement while giving companies a loophole so big they can practically pollute with impunity is outrageous. As President Obama’s former head of EPA’s Office of Enforcement told [The Hill](#), “This EPA statement is essentially a nationwide waiver of environmental rules for the indefinite future.”

Do we need any more proof that the agency should be renamed the Environmental Pollution Agency?