



# MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



This email message is being sent to EPA employees.

Colleagues,

Please know that during this COVID-19 pandemic, the safety and welfare of you and your families are of the utmost importance to me. I want to provide you with some important information on the plan to safely reoccupy our offices in alignment with the [Guidelines for Opening Up American Again](#).

Our plan for an eventual phased return to EPA offices will take a measured and deliberate approach that ensures your health and safety. The Guidelines define gating criteria that provide for a data driven approach alongside an evaluation of site-specific conditions and state and local health department requirements. Our plan provides for a “rolling reopening,” so each facility will enter Phase 1 according to local data and conditions.

We have looked at the data for our office locations and continue to monitor the actions of state and local governments. This review has led me to the decision to initiate the opening of a few of our locations: Region 4 (Atlanta, GA), Region 7 (Lenexa, KS) and Region 10 (Seattle, WA). This week, for Region 4 we closed the facility at 5 pm on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 and Region 7 and Region 10 will close as of COB today. We are doing this because the coronavirus is rendered inactive after 7 days. In addition, these closures are being conducted as outlined in the [EPA/CDC Cleaning and Disinfection Guidance](#). The next step would be for these locations to enter Phase 1 after a second review of the data.

To guide our decision-making through this process, we have leveraged our own EPA scientific professionals to evaluate data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other expert sources. As we move through other phases we will evaluate the status of any guidance of state and local officials and continue to evaluate data from CDC.

It is important to note that the agency will continue to provide maximum telework flexibilities to all employees through Phase 2, along with maximum work schedule flexibilities (e.g., maxiflex scheduling, altered core hours, etc.) to all employees through Phase 1. Employees who the CDC identifies as being at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including pregnant women, employees managing dependent care while continuing to work, as well as staff who have household members that are part of this population, should telework through Phase 2.

I also want to ensure that our plan provides for frequent messaging from senior leadership as we move each location through the 3 Phases. I strongly encourage you to continue checking the [EPA COVID-19 page](#) for links to resources and helpful tips for employees, including Frequently Asked Questions. We are continuing to update these pages as new information becomes available.

Please remember, you have my commitment that employees will be afforded maximum telework flexibility though Phase 2 and longer for those taking care of children and other family members while carrying out our important EPA work. As we continue to go through this together, I commend everyone for doing their very best in meeting your work responsibilities while being mindful of what we are all going through as individuals. I know it hasn't been easy, and everyone's circumstance is unique, which is also why I want employees to feel supported during this prolonged and challenging period of time.

Employees who need additional assistance are encouraged to reach out to their supervisors for support. We understand that this is a stressful time for everyone and want to remind employees that the Employee Assistance Program is available all day, every day at 800.222.0364.

To all of you, please be extra careful to keep yourself and your loved ones safe, using the power you have as individuals to slow the spread. Be good to yourselves and please take the time you need to protect and promote YOUR health.

Stay safe, well, and strong. We need you – our employees are EPA's most important asset.

Andrew Wheeler  
Administrator