



MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



This email message is being sent to EPA employees.

Dear Colleagues,

At the start of the year, who could have predicted that our nation would be both overcome with such significant change and united in a common experience from the impacts of COVID-19 – the loss of life, concerns about health, and fears of economic uncertainty. Throughout our experience of this pandemic, my priority is always the health and safety of the EPA extended family. Our goal is to ensure that the decisions we make to return to work are based upon the best data available and the guidance that state and local public health agencies are providing.

Our experts in the Office of Research and Development have done a remarkable job, week after week, of assessing the gating criteria and providing weekly updates to the EPA Facility Dashboard. The Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs has also closely tracked the decisions being made at the state and local level. Out of an abundance of caution, we have spent several weeks holding many of our facilities from moving forward in their gradual reopening. However, this week we have seen some progress in the 14-day trend data and other information we've reviewed.

Based upon this progress, next Tuesday, August 4, we are moving both Region 1 and the National Capitol Region offices into Phase 2. I took this step after reviewing the dashboard, considering the phases that Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland are in and consulting with the leadership of ORD and OMS. Both the National Capitol Region and Region 1 have been in Phase 1 for 39 days because I wanted to be certain that we did not move too quickly. At this point, I am confident that we should move into Phase 2.

In addition, the following facilities will also be moving to Phase 2: Traverse City, MI; Duluth, MN; Narragansett, RI; New Haven, CT; Helena, MT; Buffalo, Albany, and Syracuse, NY; Wheeling, WV; and Middleburg Heights and Westlake, OH. The following facilities will be moving into the 7-day shutdown period; Portland, Corvallis and Newport, OR; St. Thomas, VI; and Pierre, SD. Finally, all the Cincinnati, OH and Ann Arbor, MI facilities will be moving to Phase 1.

Our decision to move forward with these facilities' reopening plans is a balancing act, considering both the gating criteria data and decisions being made by state and local public health officials. Despite cities and states moving forward in their phases – on to Phase 2 or 3 several weeks back – we remain cautious and deliberate in our moves forward. I now believe our analysis supports the above locations moving forward.

As a reminder for the locations moving into Phase 2, employees are expected to return to normal work schedules (except for those who continue to have dependent care issues), and telework is at the option of the employee but you should notify your supervisor if you choose to telework. Facilities are open and employees have the option to return to the workplace. If you choose to go into the office, review the [Self-Assessment Questionnaire](#) prior to leaving your residence. Please do not enter the building if you answer yes to any of the listed questions.

I encourage everyone to review the [supplemental agency guidance for Phase 3](#) and keep checking the [EPA COVID-19 page](#) for links to resources and helpful tips for employees. We will share more information as it becomes available. Meanwhile, please reach out to your supervisor if you have questions about your circumstances and work.

Thank you for all that you do. Please stay safe and well.

Andrew Wheeler
Administrator