



PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

962 Wayne Ave • Suite 610 • Silver Spring, MD 20910

July 8, 2021

The Honorable Michael Regan  
Administrator U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Mail code 1101A  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

On behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment by President Biden and your confirmation by the United States Senate as the 16th administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. PEER applauds your commitment to having EPA operate in a “fishbowl” and your recognition of the vital role the press plays in informing the public about EPA’s actions.

In light of your commitment to transparency and openness, I am writing to ask for your clarification about when scientists at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can speak freely with the media and public about scientific and technical matters based on their official work.

The need for greater transparency and openness at EPA was reinforced last week when PEER disclosed reports by scientists within EPA’s Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT) of routine alteration of new chemical assessments to remove or greatly downplay risk calculations. These alternations will have significant impacts on the health and safety of workers and the American public. That disclosure has received significant press attention.

In response to this press attention, OPPT Chief of Staff Alison Pierce wrote on July 7, 2021, in an all-employee email:

“We’ve had a slight uptick recently in reporters contacting OPPT employees, so I’m sending out one of our periodic reminders that OPPT has SOPs in place should a member of the press reach out to you or your staff. Please remember that we are not authorized to answer press questions directly, and that OPPT (and EPA) have processes that should be followed should someone reach out to you.”

Pierce distributed a protocol warning staff that, if contacted by a reporter, “don’t start answering any questions. Explain that press inquiries must be handled through our press office.”


In light of this email, we are writing to ask you to state unambiguously that EPA scientists and other specialists should be allowed to answer press questions directly and that staff should be available to reporters to discuss matters within their area of expertise. Such a statement would

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further your commitment to transparency and openness and would be vital to restoring the public's confidence in EPA's ability to protect human health and the environment

On behalf of PEER and our many supporters, I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Timothy Whitehouse  
Executive Director