

To: Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy
From: EPA Press Office
Sent: Sun 9/3/2017 4:19:21 PM
Subject: EPA Response To The AP's Misleading Story

Good afternoon –

Yesterday, the Associated Press' Michael Biesecker wrote an **incredibly misleading story** about toxic land sites that are under water.

Despite reporting from the comfort of Washington, Biesecker had the audacity to imply that agencies aren't being responsive to the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey. Not only is this inaccurate, but it creates panic and politicizes the hard work of first responders who are actually in the affected area.

Here's the truth: through aerial imaging, EPA has already conducted initial assessments at **41** Superfund sites – **28** of those sites show no damage, and **13** have experienced flooding. This was left out of the original story, along with the fact that EPA and state agencies worked with responsible parties to secure Superfund sites before the hurricane hit. Leaving out this critical information is misleading.

Administrator Pruitt already visited Southeast Texas and is in constant contact with local, state and county officials. And EPA, has a team of experts imbedded with other local, state and federal authorities, on the ground responding to Harvey - none of which Biesecker included in his story.

Unfortunately, the **Associated Press' Michael Biesecker** has a history of letting the facts get in the way of his story. Earlier this summer, he made-up a meeting that Administrator Pruitt had, and then deliberately discarded information that refuted his inaccurate story – ultimately prompting a nation-wide correction. Additionally, the [Oklahoman](#) took him to task for sensationalized reporting.

- [Correction: EPA-Dow Chemical story](#)
- [Associated Press Engulfed in CNN-Level Scandal as It Covers Up Invention of Imaginary Pruitt Meeting](#)

If you're reporting on this misleading story then below is a statement from the EPA.

“Once again, in an attempt to mislead Americans, the Associated Press is cherry-picking facts, as EPA is monitoring Superfund sites around Houston and we have a team of experts on the ground working with our state and local counterparts responding to Hurricane Harvey. Anything to the contrary is yellow journalism.” - EPA Associate Administrator, Liz Bowman

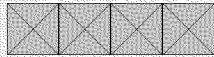
BACKGROUND ...

The Hill reports EPA finds 13 Superfund sites possibly damaged after Harvey. "The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said Saturday that 13 Superfund sites have been flooded or could be facing damage as a result of Hurricane Harvey. The agency said that two of the sites, which are areas that are polluted with hazardous material and require extensive cleanup, had been

inspected and do not require immediate cleanup. Eleven sites have proven to be inaccessible for response teams, however the agency said teams are in place to inspect the areas once flooding from the storm subsides. In total, the EPA said that it had conducted initial assessments at 41 Superfund sites in impacted areas using 'aerial images' and contact with those responsible for regular cleanup activities." ([The Hill](#), 09/02/17)

In June, the editorial board at the [Oklahoman](#) reminded their readers of the sensationalized reporting that comes from the Associated Press' Michael Biesecker. "The disdain that some in the media have for President Trump and members of his administration is evident regularly. Recent coverage related to EPA administrator Scott Pruitt provides an example of interest to locals because of Pruitt's Oklahoma ties. ... An Associated Press story from Washington last week about emails Pruitt sent and received as attorney general did what it could to further establish Pruitt as a minion for the oil and gas industry — which environmentalists see as dead set on ruining the earth as we know it. The AP, a wire service used by media outlets around the world including The Oklahoman, said the emails 'underscore just how closely' Pruitt 'coordinated with fossil fuel companies' as Oklahoma's AG, 'a position in which he frequently sued to block federal efforts to curb planet-warming carbon emissions.' That's quite an opening paragraph. Pruitt didn't just work with energy companies while attorney general — he worked 'closely' with 'fossil fuel companies' (the ultimate bogey men) to essentially keep global warming from abating. ... The fact Pruitt regularly corresponded and dealt with energy industry officials as attorney general of a state where energy is the No. 1 industry should not be surprising nor should it, by itself, be considered nefarious."

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To: Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy
From: EPA Press Office
Sent: Sun 9/3/2017 3:43:25 PM
Subject: STATUS OF WATER SYSTEMS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY HARVEY

CONTACT: press@epa.gov

STATUS OF WATER SYSTEMS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY HARVEY

WASHINGTON (September 3, 2017) – Working together, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) continue to coordinate with local, state and federal officials to address the human health and environmental impacts of Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath, especially the water systems in the affected areas. As of Saturday, September 2nd, 2017, the following information is available:

- **Drinking Water:** Half (2300) of the 4500 drinking water systems potentially affected by Harvey have been contacted. Of those: 1514 systems are fully operational, 166 have boil-water notices, and 50 are shut down. The agencies are contacting remaining systems to gather updated information of their status. Assistance Teams are in the field working directly with system operators to expedite bringing systems back to operational status. Additional drinking water assessments should be up and running within the next day.
- **Waste Water and Sewage:** Currently, 1656 of approximately 2469 wastewater treatment plants are fully operational in the affected counties. The agencies are aware that releases of wastewater from sanitary sewers that is occurring, due to the historic flooding and are actively working to monitor facilities that have reported spills, conduct outreach and provide technical guidance to all other wastewater facilities in flood-impacted areas. EPA and TCEQ are working closely with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Texas Military Department, and other local and state agencies to continuously monitor wastewater systems. Houston's unified command will be up and running shortly to support water testing. Assistance Teams will be deployed to work directly with system operators to expedite bringing systems back to operational status.
- **Residential Wells:** EPA is developing a plan for sampling residential wells, and is coordinating with TCEQ to establish several locations where residents can bring water samples from their wells to be tested.
- **Flood Water:** Water quality sampling will be focused on industrial facilities and hazardous waste sites. Floodwaters contain many hazards, including bacteria and other contaminants. Precautions should be taken by anyone involved in cleanup activities or any others who may be exposed to flood waters. These precautions include heeding all warnings from local and state authorities regarding safety advisories. In addition to the drowning hazards of wading, swimming, or driving in swift floodwaters, these waters can carry large objects that are not always readily visible that can cause injuries to those in the water. Other potential hazards include downed power lines and possible injuries inflicted by animals displaced by the floodwaters.

Additional EPA/TCEQ updates include:

- **Superfund Sites:** EPA and TCEQ continue to get updates about the status of specific sites from the parties responsible for ongoing cleanup of the sites. The most recent information can be found [here](#).
- **Air Quality Monitoring:** One of the many preparations for Hurricane Harvey included EPA, TCEQ, and other monitoring entities temporarily removing approximately 75 percent of the stationary air monitoring equipment from the greater Houston, Corpus Christi, and Beaumont areas. Since then, state and local authorities are working to get the systems up and running again. As of Saturday, September 2, over 70 percent of the monitors are up and working again; and authorities expect that the network will be fully operational again by next week. Of the available air monitoring data collected from August 24-September 2, 2017, all measured concentrations were well below levels of health concern. Monitors are showing that air quality at this time is not concerning and local residents should not be concerned about air quality issues related to the effects of the storm.
- **Fires at Arkema Facility in Crosby, Texas:** EPA and TCEQ are coordinating closely with Harris County Officials along with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and other local public safety officials. As a result of initial chemical fires while the facility was flooded, EPA has collected downstream surface water runoff samples at four locations outside the evacuation zone, near residential areas. EPA and TCEQ will maintain a 24 hour watch and maintain a 24-hour presence at the incident command operations center near this facility, to support local emergency personnel on the ground. The 1.5 mile radius evacuation zone remains in effect until local emergency response authorities announce it is safe.
- **Refineries/Fuel Waivers:** In addition to waivers for 38 states and D.C., EPA signed four No Action Assurance (NAA) letters on September 1, to help address fuel shortages. NAA will help expedite the distribution of existing gasoline supplies to both Texas and Louisiana, while the refineries work to re-start and resume normal operations. Each is effective until September 15, 2017, and should allow for the distribution in Texas of 10 million or more gallons of gasoline to consumers.

For additional information from TCEQ, please visit: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/hurricanes>

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