

## Barbery, Andrea

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**From:** Message from the Administrator  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:02 PM  
**To:** Message from the Administrator  
**Subject:** Policy on Elevation of Critical Environmental and Public Health Issues

**Expires:** Saturday, October 14, 2017 12:00 AM



**FROM:** E. Scott Pruitt

**TO:** All EPA Employees

In carrying out our mission of protecting human health and the environment, I want to reaffirm the importance of elevating critical environmental and public health issues so that we can properly assess them and respond at appropriate policy and governmental levels in a timely and effective manner.

I have been leading the EPA to promote a healthier environment and strong economy for future generations by focusing on three core principles: rule of law, cooperative federalism and promoting public participation. The agency's role is to faithfully administer the laws Congress has passed, while working with states to address environmental issues with robust public participation. I am asking you to review issues through our statutory role and be eager to assist states, tribes and local governments when we see potential environmental vulnerability, including health risks, whether from air pollution, drinking water contamination, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste or other sources. We must approach our state, tribal and local government leaders as partners in problem solving and work closely with them to address human health and environmental risks.

The EPA issued the original elevation policy on January 21, 2016, following the drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan. The people of Flint and all Americans deserve a responsive government, and it is important that as an agency we reflect on lessons learned and how we could have responded in a more coordinated manner. I urge all EPA employees to elevate concerns quickly and think creatively when a broader perspective would suggest that a larger public health or environmental issue is at stake.

Today, I am affirming the EPA's formal elevation policy. Leaders at the EPA should continue to encourage staff to elevate issues that have the following characteristics:

- There appears to be a substantial threat to the environment or human health; or
- The EPA is or can reasonably be expected to be a focus of the need for action; or
- Other authorities have a role in addressing the threat and may need federal assistance, including when those authorities appear to be unable to address or unsuccessful in effectively addressing such a threat; or

- Recourse to normal enforcement and compliance tools is not appropriate or unlikely to succeed in the near term;  
or
- High and sustained public attention and concern is possible.

When an issue is elevated at the regional level, it must be communicated to headquarters – both to my office and the national program offices – so that we can ensure that the agency’s response is proactive and coordinated. Following the previous elevation memo, program offices and regional offices have developed elevation policies. I have requested that the Executive Management Council develop a common elevation procedure based on best practices and experiences throughout the EPA.

It is our responsibility to ensure good communication at all levels in the agency – among our peers, across organizational lines and between the regions and headquarters. There may be instances that warrant elevation that do not fall specifically in the list provided above. Therefore, I expect you to use sound judgment in elevating issues and to do so in a way that enables us to engage the full decision-making resources of the agency.

Once again, it is my absolute privilege to serve with you. I am confident that in the years ahead we can continue to work together so that our future generations inherit a better and healthier environment.