

Toolkit: EPA Refusing to Account for Loss of Human Life and Health

Introduction

Zeldin's EPA has decided to stop counting the public health benefits of reducing deadly air pollutants, including the prevention of asthma attacks and premature deaths, when writing and repealing clean-air rules. Internal EPA documents show the agency will no longer assign monetary value to the health benefits of reducing fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ozone, two of the most widespread and dangerous air pollutants in the United States.

For decades, the agency used a standard measure—about \$11.7 million per life—to weigh the real benefits of public health protections. This approach made one thing clear: clean air rules save far more lives and prevent far more illness than they cost to implement. This analysis helped EPA defend strong air quality standards against claims that they were too expensive. By refusing to account for the value of the lives and health problems that pollution causes, EPA's current leadership is stacking the deck in favor of polluters – just the latest and most blatant step in its drive to eliminate important protections for human life and safety.

Topline Messaging

- If saving lives is worth \$0 to the EPA, then the EPA has abandoned its core mission: protecting Americans from the health effects of toxic pollution.
- This is a *calculated* move to help polluters by hiding the health harms from courts, Congress, and the public.
- By erasing the value of human life, EPA just made it easier to weaken clean air protections and harder to defend public health.

- For decades, EPA's own analysis has proved clean air saves more lives than it costs. Now, leadership is choosing ignorance over evidence.
- Congress must step up and hold EPA accountable to serve the American people—not big corporate polluters.

Talking Points

What the Precedent Says

- For decades—under both Democratic and Republican administrations—the federal government has recognized that a human life has real value, measured in the millions of dollars.
 - Accounting for the economic value of human life and health was important in establishing the need for regulations limiting toxic pollution because it showed that, beyond the moral value of Americans' lives and health, regulating pollution had significant economic benefits that outweighed its costs.
 - By refusing to account for the economic value of lives saved and illnesses prevented, current EPA leaders are stacking the deck in favor of polluters by ensuring that only the costs of regulations, and not their health benefits, are quantified.
 - This change skews the cost-benefit analysis that EPA is required by law to perform for any regulation, making life-saving regulations vulnerable to court challenges and elsewhere.
- This is a drastic shift in how the government weighs the costs of curbing air pollution against the benefits to public health and the environment.
 - The result is clear: looser limits on pollution from coal plants, oil refineries, steel mills, and other industrial sites—and dirtier air for communities across the country.

What the Science Says

- The science is clear: Long-term exposure to PM2.5 and ozone is linked to premature death, asthma, dementia, and heart and lung disease. Even moderate PM2.5 exposure can damage lungs as much as smoking.

- Despite overwhelming evidence, EPA is now claiming the benefits of reducing this pollution are “too uncertain” to count. That claim directly contradicts decades of peer-reviewed research and the agency’s own findings.

Combatting What EPA is Saying

- Zeldin’s administration claims that removing a dollar value from health impacts doesn’t mean they’re ignoring them. But removing health benefits from the cost-benefit equation skews the process in favor of polluters.
 - EPA is required to assess the costs and benefits of proposed regulations.
 - Protecting the health and safety of Americans is the primary goal of environmental regulations – so erasing the economic benefits of health protections erases while quantifying the costs of compliance makes it easier to justify rolling back key environmental protections.
 - Polluters are eager to erase the health benefits of pollution limits because time and again, the health benefits of these limits have far outweighed their costs.
- Removing benefits from cost-benefit analysis is designed to make these rules more vulnerable to challenge in the courts or in Congress.

The Human Cost

- The decision to ignore the economic benefits of better health and safety is in service of a broader effort to tear down a set of environmental protections that [EPN analysis shows](#) would bring \$254 billion in annual benefits – outweighing compliance costs by 6-to-1.
 - Those gains come from fewer hospital visits, lower health care costs, longer and healthier lives, and protections secured under the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and other cornerstone environmental laws.
- The cost of pollution is measured in human lives. Long-term exposure to PM2.5 and ozone is linked to premature death, asthma, dementia, and serious heart and lung disease—harms the science has documented for decades.

A Dangerous Political Agenda

- When EPA refuses to count lives saved, it makes those deaths easier to ignore. Declaring health benefits “too uncertain” doesn’t erase the harm—it erases accountability.
- The result is more pollution and more preventable deaths. Weakening the tools that justify clean air protections means dirtier air and higher human costs, especially for children, seniors, and communities already overburdened.
- This move is another part of a coordinated authoritarian strategy to ignore the health of the American public and, in turn, focus on corporate profits.

What you can do: Social Media

To maximize our collective impact and social media algorithms, please share the social media post by EPN:

LINKEDIN:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7420245597951102976>

INSTAGRAM:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DT1NtbEkn4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==

FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/EnviroProtNet/posts/pfbid0onbMjdyx8dYFRzT76L2wX3nSRN4Hz2QnMB4ZxnXKY29ATioGTkrBGSiuS6k8TrCtI>

Please repost or share widely to your networks, using the draft copy below.

Remember, your voice and expertise make the message even stronger:

You can also post your own, personal messages to social media. Add a quick thought, personal observation, or expansion of one of the key points based on your personal expertise.

If relevant, relate your post content to your state or community.

Reshare Copy

Option one:

This really says it all. Clean air and healthy communities should never be optional or treated as an afterthought.

The EPA exists to protect people — our families, our neighbors, our kids — not to make it easier for polluters to cut corners.

Thanks for speaking up about why this matters to all of us.

Option two:

This is wrong. Our health and safety shouldn't be negotiable or pushed aside for convenience.

The EPA was created to protect people, plain and simple, and it's important we keep speaking up when that mission is put at risk.