01/12/2010

MEMORANDUM
From: Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator
To: All EPA Employees

Colleagues:

Almost one year ago, I began my work as Administrator. It has been a deeply fulfilling 12 months and a wonderful homecoming for me. As our first year together draws to a close, we must now look to the tasks ahead.

In my First Day Memo, I outlined five priorities for my time as Administrator. We have made enormous strides on all five, and our achievements reflect your hard work and dedication. By working with our senior policy team, listening to your input and learning from the experiences of the last 12 months, we have strengthened our focus and expanded the list of priorities. Listed below are seven key themes to focus the work of our agency.

Taking Action on Climate Change: Last year saw historic progress in the fight against climate change, with a range of greenhouse gas reduction initiatives. We must continue this critical effort and ensure compliance with the law. We will continue to support the President and Congress in enacting clean energy and climate legislation. Using the Clean Air Act, we will finalize our mobile source rules and provide a framework for continued improvements in that sector. We will build on the success of ENERGY STAR to expand cost-saving energy conservation and efficiency programs. And we will continue to develop common-sense solutions for reducing GHG emissions from large stationary sources like power plants. In all of this, we must also recognize that climate change will affect other parts of our core mission, such as protecting air and water quality, and we must include those considerations in our future plans.

Improving Air Quality: American communities face serious health and environmental challenges from air pollution. We have already proposed stronger ambient air quality standards for ozone, which will help millions of American breathe easier and live healthier. Building on that, EPA will develop a comprehensive strategy for a cleaner and more efficient power sector, with strong but achievable emission reduction goals for SO2, NOx, mercury and other air toxics. We will strengthen our ambient air quality standards for pollutants such as PM, SO2 and NO2 and will achieve additional reductions in air toxics from a range of industrial facilities. Improved monitoring, permitting and enforcement will be critical building blocks for air quality improvement.

Assuring the Safety of Chemicals: One of my highest priorities is to make significant and long overdue progress in assuring the safety of chemicals in our products, our environment and our bodies. Last year I announced principles for modernizing the Toxic Substances Control Act. Separately, we are shifting EPA's focus to address high-concern chemicals and filling data gaps on widely produced chemicals in commerce. At the end of 2009, we released our first-ever chemical management plans for four groups of substances, and more plans are in the pipeline for 2010. Using our streamlined Integrated Risk Information System, we will continue strong progress toward rigorous, peer-reviewed health assessments on dioxins, arsenic, formaldehyde, TCE and other substances of concern.

Cleaning Up Our Communities: In 2009 EPA made strong cleanup progress by accelerating our Superfund program and confronting significant local environmental challenges like the asbestos Public Health Emergency in Libby, Montana and the coal ash spill in Kingston, Tennessee. Using all the tools at our disposal, including enforcement and compliance efforts, we will continue to focus on making safer, healthier communities. I am committed to maximizing the potential of our brownfields program, particularly to spur environmental cleanup and job creation in disadvantaged communities. We are also developing enhanced strategies for risk reduction in our Superfund program, with stronger partnerships with stakeholders affected by our cleanups.

Protecting America's Waters: America's waterbodies are imperiled as never before. Water quality and enforcement programs face complex challenges, from nutrient loadings and stormwater runoff, to invasive species and drinking water contaminants. These challenges demand both traditional and innovative strategies. We will continue comprehensive watershed protection programs for the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes. We will initiate measures to address post-construction runoff, water quality impairment from surface mining, and stronger drinking water protection. Recovery Act funding will expand construction of water infrastructure, and we will work with states to develop nutrient limits and launch an Urban Waters initiative. We will also revamp enforcement strategies to achieve greater compliance across the board.

Expanding the Conversation on Environmentalism and Working for Environmental Justice: We have begun a new era of outreach and protection for communities historically underrepresented in EPA decision-making. We are building strong working relationships with tribes, communities of color, economically distressed cities and towns, young people and others, but this is just a start. We must include environmental justice principles in all of our decisions. This is an area that calls for innovation and bold thinking, and I am challenging all of our employees to bring vision and creativity to our programs. The protection of vulnerable subpopulations is a top priority, especially with regard to children. Our revitalized Children's Health Office is bringing a new energy to safeguarding children through all of our enforcement efforts. We will ensure that children's health protection continues to guide the path forward.

Building Strong State and Tribal Partnerships: States and tribal nations bear important responsibilities for the day-to-day mission of environmental protection, but declining tax revenues and fiscal challenges are pressuring state agencies and tribal governments to do more with fewer resources. Strong partnerships and accountability are more important than ever. EPA must do its part to support state and tribal capacity and, through strengthened oversight, ensure that programs are consistently delivered nationwide. Where appropriate, we will use our own expertise and capacity to bolster state and tribal efforts.

We will also focus on improving EPA's internal operations, from performance measures to agency processes. We have a complex organization -- which is both an asset and a challenge. We will strive to ensure that EPA is a workplace worthy of our top notch workforce. Our success will depend on supporting innovation and creativity in both what we do and how we do it, and I encourage everyone to be part of constructively improving our agency.

These priorities will guide our work in 2010 and the years ahead. They are built around the challenges and opportunities inherent in our mission to protect human health and the environment for all Americans. We will carry out our mission by respecting our core values of science, transparency and the rule of law. I have unlimited confidence in the talent and spirit of our workforce, and I will look to your energy, ideas and passion in the days ahead. I know we will meet these challenges head on, as one EPA.

Sincerely,
Lisa P. Jackson