



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

This email message is being sent to EPA employees.

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to 2022 at EPA! I know that the COVID virus impacted many people's holidays this year, with cancelled trips, and — even scarier — illness for some of our EPA family members, our relatives and friends. Some of our colleagues were working over the holidays, helping to deal with the aftermath of the tornadoes in Kentucky or the drinking water contamination in Honolulu, to name two of the calamities affecting people in this country where EPA has an important role to play protecting public health.

I am proud to work alongside these amazing public servants. In spite of all that, I hope that you were able to enjoy some downtime, some time with people you love, and doing things that bring you joy and energy for the year ahead. I am stepping into 2022 hopeful and enthusiastic about the many achievements I know we will accomplish together.

The past two years have been especially challenging for all of us. With the continued uncertainty of the Omicron variant, I wanted to share a few updates on where we are at this time and reinforce some of the measures we all can take to keep ourselves and each other as healthy and safe as possible.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to expect a surge of COVID-19 cases in the coming days to weeks due to the Omicron variant. Experts are predicting that the peak may happen within the next few weeks and expect a rapid drop-off, as has happened in other countries.

This is a rapidly changing time for the virus. Please remember to check the [COVID-19 EPA Facility Dashboard](#) to see what the community transmission rate is currently in your office location. While I am reassured by the fact that our workforce is largely vaccinated, [breakthrough infections](#) in people who are fully vaccinated, including being boosted, are likely to occur, as many of us know from personal experience. It is clear, however, that people who are vaccinated and boosted are far less likely to experience severe symptoms or need to go to the hospital.

I encourage everyone to equip yourselves with the best protection against the Omicron variant by both being fully vaccinated and getting a [booster](#) shot at least two months after your initial Johnson & Johnson vaccine or six months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series of Pfizer or Moderna. As a reminder, employees will be granted paid administrative leave to obtain a booster, an [additional dose](#) for those who are immunocompromised, or to accompany a family member who is receiving a vaccination.

Our current data shows that 95 percent of our EPA employees are vaccinated. The agency is moving forward with the disciplinary process for those who have yet to comply with President Biden's vaccination [mandate](#). The agency is also moving forward in the review of the exception requests due to medical conditions and sincerely held religious beliefs.

As I mentioned in my message two weeks ago, we have modified our [timeline](#) for an increased return to the workplace for non-bargaining unit employees, so that our phased return would start at the very end of January. We are continuing to reevaluate the situation as it relates to our reentry dates. We are also proceeding with our union negotiations and hope to get resolution soon so that all employees can gain some certainty on their permanent schedules and opportunities for telework and remote work.

Thank you for continuing your work as we navigate our workplace operations in such an uncertain and challenging time. I appreciate all that you do for your colleagues, for our remarkable mission, and for the American public.

Janet McCabe
Deputy Administrator