



## **EPA scientists have saved millions of lives – here's why we shouldn't fire them**

As medical and scientific professional societies committed to clean air and healthy lungs, we are very concerned that a recent announcement to dismantle the scientific research arm of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will make it harder for people to breathe.

Recently, it [was reported](#) (Lisa Friedman, NYTimes, March 2025) that the Administration is looking to eliminate the EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD), the arm of the agency that conducts and synthesizes recent scientific research on how pollutants in our water, air, and land affect our health and welfare. Among the many critical roles that ORD plays in improving public health and welfare, we highlight one special function in particular – the development of the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA) for air pollutants. The ISA plays an outstanding role in protecting us all from the consequences of unhealthy air, with an impact that spreads far beyond the US.

The ISA is written by EPA scientists at ORD to compile and integrate the latest scientific research about how air pollutants like lead, ozone, and particulate matter harm our health—including heart and lung disease, cognitive impacts, and death. These experts also frame how air pollutants impair visibility, degrade infrastructure, and affect our ecosystems and climate. A separate office evaluates the policy implications. Once published, the ISA serves as the foundation for US National Ambient Air Quality Standards, which limit how much pollution can be released into the air.

This rigorous process of translating science into policy works incredibly well. Over the past 50 years, the EPA has been extremely successful at improving air quality across the country, which has dramatically improved the health of millions of Americans, [lengthened life expectancy](#), and has [saved trillions of dollars](#) in health and productivity benefits. Saving money, promoting commerce, and supporting effective government policy is a stated focus for the US administration, but eliminating the ORD will do the opposite.

Simply reassigning the role of developing the ISA to another branch of EPA without this expertise would be wasteful and could compromise its accuracy and objectivity. ORD already has the required breadth and depth of experience to conduct this scientific review, and works independently of the EPA's policy office. It would be inappropriate to commingle the assessment of science and policy in the same office. The ISA process of EPA's ORD is renowned worldwide for providing the most rigorous synthesis of the scientific evidence on the health effects of air pollutants.



Despite progress, poor air quality is still responsible for [mortality](#) and other health harms like [heart attacks](#), [asthma attacks](#), [strokes](#), and increased risks of [autism](#), [Alzheimer's disease](#), and [lower IQ](#). Air pollution is bad for everyone, even healthy people, but can be [particularly harmful](#) for kids, older adults, and people with preexisting conditions, like asthma, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Making America healthy will require cleaner air and the expertise of ORD to conduct rigorous science, independently of politics, to safeguard the millions of American lives.

It's easy to take for granted a cleaner and healthier environment, but Americans will miss it when it's gone. Firing scientists and dismantling the EPA ISA process will not make air pollution go away. But it will make it harder to breathe.

**Signatories:**

American Thoracic Society

International Society for Environmental Epidemiology, North America Chapter

American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST)

*ATS, ISEE, and CHEST membership includes scientists from academic, industry, and government agencies from across the globe, including scientists from the EPA.*