

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 26, 2026

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We write regarding the working conditions of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) employees at the Region 8 Headquarters Building, located at 1595 Wynkoop St, Denver, CO 80202. Our offices have received reports raising serious concerns about employee safety, including inadequate emergency preparedness and communication, unclear telework policies during severe weather, and the removal of technology essential for employees to contact emergency responders.

It has been brought to our attention that EPA employees lack a clear understanding of who alerts whom during an emergency and how management becomes aware of incidents occurring in or around the building. In one purported instance, an email was sent to EPA Region 8 employees stating a call was made to a Utah agency office making threats against EPA employees and the State of Colorado, but no specifics were provided. When asked for details about the nature of the threats and the steps EPA was taking to protect staff, management did not respond. Instead, according to our constituents, an all-hands meeting was held, during which employees' questions about safety and security went unanswered, creating more questions leaving the meeting than there were going in.

The following week, there was a bomb scare across from the EPA Region 8 building. We were told employees received no direction on whether to evacuate or remain home, and reports indicated even the Deputy Regional Manager was unaware of the situation occurring near the building. According to our constituents, it appeared local management was reluctant to make decisions, and their priority was keeping employees in the building. People were allowed to come and go through the building entrance, rather than either evacuating or issuing a shelter-in-place order to ensure their safety. To make matters worse, the building's public address system does not function on the 5th floor and is often inaudible when used on other floors. We believe preventing critical announcements from reaching employees during a time of heightened danger creates a deeply hazardous working environment for our federal workers. Unfortunately, it appears that the agency's foundational values of employee safety and reliable communication are not being upheld. With that in mind, please provide the following information.

1. What is the process for notifying employees when emergencies occur nearby? Please provide specifics, including the information provided in the notification.
2. What specific steps did EPA take in response to the threats made against the office we outlined above?
3. What is EPA's standard protocol for communicating imminent threats? Was this protocol followed in this instance? If not, why not?
4. When was the building's public address system last tested, and what steps are being taken to ensure it functions on all floors of the building?

According to our constituents, during Department of Government Efficiency actions in 2025, the employees had their desk phones, which were hardwired to call emergency services, removed. Employees have been advised to call 911 using their personal cell phones, yet parts of the building do not have cell service. To help clarify what happened during this reported situation, please provide the following information.

5. Why did EPA decide to take away these phones?
6. Do you, as Administrator, agree that not having access to phones that can reliably call 911 creates unsafe working conditions?
7. How does EPA plan to ensure reliable access to emergency services given that parts of the building lack cell service?

We are aware that employees have software on their computers installed that turns them into "soft phones." However, employees report there was no training provided on how to use the software, and they have not been able to confirm that calling 911 works on these soft phones.

8. What training has been or will be provided for employees to learn how to use this software?
9. Can you confirm whether soft phones can successfully call 911, and if not, what alternatives exist if employees cannot reach emergency services via cell phone?

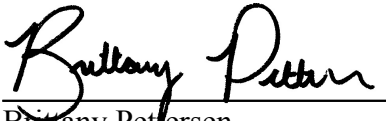
We have also heard repeated concerns about the lack of a clear and functional emergency telework policy. Employees report inconsistent or nonexistent guidance during weather events, evacuation situations, or other emergencies. Employees are told to save their small allotment of telework hours every month for emergencies, which is often impractical. During an extreme weather event in December, for example, some employees were forced to take leave because their children were home without childcare and no telework guidance was provided. On this point, please provide the following information.

10. What is EPA's current policy for emergency telework during weather events, evacuation situations, or other safety threats?

11. Why are delayed starts for the local school districts not automatically designated as telework-eligible, and how does EPA plan to support employees, particularly parents, during unexpected closures?
12. Will EPA consider allowing additional telework days specifically for weather or safety-related emergencies?

It is your responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of EPA employees. We believe the employees in the EPA Region 8 office would benefit from knowing what steps will be taken to mitigate these concerns. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response by July 17, 2026.

Sincerely,



Brittany Petersen
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress