

# EPA awards grants to monitor air quality in 37 states

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EPA Administrator Michael Regan stands near the Marathon Petroleum Refinery as he conducts a television interview, while touring neighborhoods that abut the refinery, in Reserve, La., Nov. 16, 2021. The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday awarded grants for projects to monitor air quality in 37 states, with a focus on minority communities and other areas overburdened by pollution. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, File

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday awarded grants for projects to monitor air quality in 37 states, with a focus on minority communities and other areas overburdened by pollution.

A total of 132 projects will receive \$53.4 million to enhance [air quality](#) monitoring near chemical plants, refineries and other industrial sites—part of a commitment by the Biden administration to focus on [environmental justice](#) in communities adversely affected by decades of industrial pollution.

The grants are funded by the [sweeping climate and health law](#) approved in August and the coronavirus relief plan approved by Congress last year.

"This money is headed where it's needed most," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said. The newly funded projects "will ensure dozens of overburdened communities have the tools they need to better understand air quality challenges in their neighborhoods and will help protect people from the dangers posed by air pollution," he said.

Eight projects being funded are in neighborhoods that Regan visited on what he calls a "Journey to Justice" tour of communities plagued by long-term pollution.

"All people, no matter where they live, deserve [clean water](#) and clean air and the opportunity to live a healthy life," said Regan, the first Black man to head the EPA.

The grants follow enforcement actions announced by Regan in January to conduct unannounced inspections of chemical plants, refineries and other industrial sites in three Gulf Coast states suspected of polluting air and water and causing [health problems](#) to nearby residents.

Recipients include the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, a

New Orleans-based advocacy group that has pushed for stricter federal oversight of an 85-mile (137-kilometer) stretch from New Orleans to Baton Rouge officially known as the Mississippi River Chemical Corridor but more commonly called Cancer Alley. The region contains several hotspots where cancer risks are far above levels deemed acceptable by the EPA. The group will receive nearly \$500,000 to help [community groups](#) monitor their air quality and "become more active and effective in civic engagement," the EPA said.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality received nearly \$480,000 to establish and operate a temporary air monitoring site in St. James Parish, home to numerous petrochemical plants and refineries. The equipment will allow for almost real-time data on air quality, the EPA said.

The state agency also will receive \$422,000 to conduct air quality monitoring in the Alexandria-Pineville area between two wood treatment facilities.

The Louisiana Environmental Action Network will receive \$500,000 to assess air quality throughout Louisiana's industrial corridor, and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality will receive \$500,000 to measure [air pollution](#) in the Cherokee community.

Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city by population, will receive \$500,000 to monitor four hazardous air pollutants that pose risks to communities there.

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