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MAYOR EMANUEL EXPANDS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS ACROSS CHICAGO
New plans to reduce pollution, improve enforcement and cover costs

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced continued efforts to strengthen environmental health standards and protections for Chicago's residents. The plan, proposed in the Mayor's 2018 budget, expands the city's environmental inspection program, increases fines against polluters and updates environmental fees while ensuring no new costs for residents.

"Chicago is leading the nation as an example of how cities can create a thriving business culture while also providing robust environmental safeguards," said Mayor Emanuel. "Even as President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency rolls back environmental standards and enforcement, with these actions, Chicago is sending a strong message to would-be polluters that we will continue to protect the environment."

CDPH will hire ten additional staff members, a 37 percent increase in the team, to help ensure businesses across Chicago comply with the city's environmental code. The expansion emphasizes clean air quality and better protecting residents from asthma and other health problems. Four of the new inspectors will be focused on airborne pollution and charged with cracking down on facilities and activities that emit pollutants such as manganese, lead dust and asbestos. The new staff will also include inspectors dedicated to waste and recycling, gas storage tanks and hazardous chemicals.

"Our goal is to ensure every neighborhood is clean and safe so all of our residents can enjoy lives free from pollution," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D. "By expanding our team and increasing fines, we can go after polluters while also providing greater assistance to business owners who want to do their part to protect our environment."

The increased number of environmental inspectors builds the capacity of CDPH to identify businesses operating without appropriate permits or those who aren't complying with fine and fee payments. It will also allow CDPH to provide increased technical assistance to business owners, helping them ensure they have safe, environmentally-friendly operations.

Mayor Emanuel's expansion of environmental protection staff comes at the same time state and federal officials have rolled back efforts to protect residents from pollution. President Trump and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt have pulled the United States out of the Paris Climate Agreement, rolled back the Clean Power Plan, & appointed a series of fossil fuel lobbyists to key positions in EPA's leadership. In addition, the Rauner administration has recently proposed relaxed pollution limits on coal plants, reducing air quality for millions of Illinois residents.

"We're pleased that the City of Chicago is stepping up to expand its monitoring and enforcement of pollution standards in order to better protect public health and safety," said Howard Learner, Executive Director at the Environmental Law & Policy Center. "As President Trump and EPA Administrator Pruitt are backing away from their environmental responsibilities, it's important that cities like Chicago step up to protect community residents. Chicagoans are looking to their city leaders to take actions to ensure that the air is healthy to breathe and their water is safe and clean to drink."

The funding for the expansion will come in part from updating environmental fees that have not changed in years and from raising fines on violators.

This expansion builds on Mayor Emanuel's record to protect the environment including reducing the city's carbon emissions by 11 percent since 2005, closing the city's last coal fired power plant and creating the nation's strongest bulk materials regulations. More recently, Mayor Emanuel championed the newly passed fly dumping ordinance designed to crack down on the practice of illegally dumping or storing waste on public or private property.

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