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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT INTRODUCES ORDINANCE TO INCREASE FINES ON AIR POLLUTION TO FURTHER PROTECT CHICAGO'S RESIDENTS

Ordinance will allow City to assess higher fines on industrial facilities and demolition contractors that create dust and risk the health and quality-of-life of residents

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today introduced an ordinance to increase fines on air pollution in Chicago as part of an ongoing effort to further protect residents from environmental hazards. The ordinance will allow the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to assess higher fines on industrial facilities and demolition contractors that create dust and risk the health and quality-of-life of residents.

“The health of residents will always be our top priority, which is why we need strong enforcement tools to hold companies accountable when they jeopardize it,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “This ordinance takes a big step forward in the effort to ensure accountability and deterrence for environmental violations in Chicago.”

The current penalty for a variety of air pollution violations committed by large industrial facilities—defined as those that have the capacity to emit significant amounts of pollution—must fall in a range of \$1,000 to \$5,000. Under the proposed ordinance, these fines would increase for large facilities to \$5,000 to \$10,000 for a first offense, \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a second offense, and \$15,000 to \$20,000 for any subsequent offense. The fine can go up to \$50,000 if the violation is egregious and involves visible emissions, prohibited air pollution or improper handling of material that can become windborne.

“CDPH is committed to advancing and enforcing environmental policies and rules to protect air quality,” said Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner of CDPH. “This ordinance provides our inspectors with additional enforcement tools to hold industrial facilities and demolition contractors accountable and ensure they follow the rules.”

In addition, large facilities that fail to obtain the right permit and certificate to operate will see their penalty rise from a range of \$1,000 to \$5,000 to a range of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

“With the introduction of this new ordinance, the City is ensuring that they will never hesitate to enforce our environmental safety regulations to the fullest extent possible when



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encountering violations," said Susan Sadlowski Garza, 10th Ward Alderwoman. "Today's measure builds on our efforts to hold bad actors accountable and restore justice to our communities."

Under the proposed ordinance, there are also additional penalties for contractors that demolish large commercial buildings without keeping the dust under control. The current range of \$5,000 to \$10,000 will stay in place for first offenders, but second offenses will now have a range of \$10,000 to \$15,000 and subsequent offenses will have a range of \$15,000 to \$20,000. If there's a particularly egregious violation involving the lack of safeguards, dust minimization, or disposal of dust and debris, the fine can be up to \$50,000. There will be no change in the fines on contractors demolishing smaller buildings or on facilities that do not have the potential to emit large amounts of pollution.

"Wards like the 12th Ward with Planned Manufacturing Districts must balance industry, environmental health and safety, and livability without the support of a Department of Environment," said George A. Cardenas, 12th Ward Alderman. "This year has been particularly challenging for the residents of Little Village who have endured many air pollution violations during a respiratory pandemic. Enforcement of environmental regulations violations has been long-overdue in the City of Chicago. That's why with this new ordinance, we are ramping up our enforcement efforts and increasing fines to ensure that bad actors are held accountable."

Today's proposed ordinance follows the City's rapid and aggressive effort to hold companies accountable for excessive dust and other air pollution violations. Following the dust caused by the implosion of a smokestack located on the grounds of the former Crawford Power Generating Station in April, Mayor Lightfoot implemented a six-month moratorium on demolitions by implosion citywide and directed City departments to create a strict implosion permitting process. And, in June, the City imposed tough rules on large recycling facilities, banning numerous activities and requiring planning, monitoring, and transparency to ensure dust does not escape the property. The City also issued a citation for an explosion this year at General Iron in Lincoln Park. Under the proposed ordinance, the City would allow for higher fines for such violations.

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