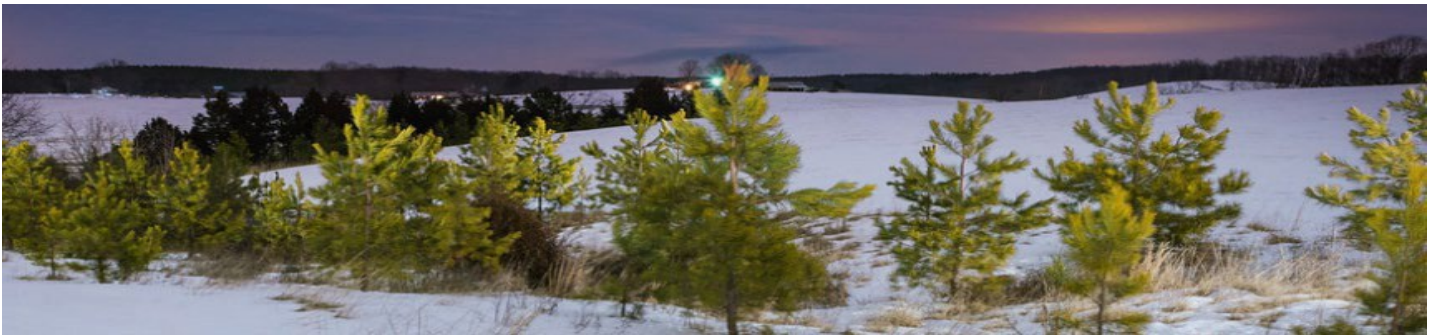


# EPA REGION 6 – SOUTH CENTRAL

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Dallas, Texas 75270

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## HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico,  
Texas, and 66 Tribes

### Helping Kids Learn in a Pollution Free Environment

#### THE ORIGINS OF EPA

The American conversation about protecting the environment began in the 1960s. Rachel Carson had published her attack on the indiscriminate use of pesticides, *Silent Spring*, in 1962. Concern about air and water pollution had spread in the wake of disasters. An offshore oil rig in California fouled beaches with millions of gallons of spilled oil. Near Cleveland, Ohio, the Cuyahoga River, choking with chemical contaminants, had spontaneously burst into flames. Astronauts had begun photographing the Earth from space, heightening awareness that the Earth's resources are finite.

In early 1970, because of heightened public concerns about deteriorating city air, natural areas littered with debris, and urban water supplies contaminated with dangerous impurities, President Richard Nixon presented the House and Senate a groundbreaking 37-point message on the environment. These points included:

- requesting four billion dollars for the improvement of water treatment facilities;
- asking for national air quality standards and stringent guidelines to lower motor vehicle emissions;
- launching federally funded research to reduce automobile pollution;
- ordering a clean-up of federal facilities that had fouled air and water;
- seeking legislation to end the dumping of wastes into the Great Lakes;
- proposing a tax on lead additives in gasoline;
- forwarding to Congress a plan to tighten safeguards on the seaborne transportation of oil; and
- approving a National Contingency Plan for the treatment of oil spills.

Around the same time, President Nixon also created a council in part to consider how to organize federal government programs designed to reduce pollution, so that those programs could efficiently address the goals laid out in his message on the environment. Following the council's recommendations, the president sent to Congress a plan to consolidate many environmental responsibilities of the federal government under one agency, a new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This reorganization would permit response to environmental problems in a manner beyond the previous capability of government pollution control programs:

- The EPA would have the capacity to do research on important pollutants irrespective of the media in which they appear, and on the impact of these pollutants on the total environment.
- Both by itself and together with other agencies, the EPA would monitor the condition of the environment--biological as well as physical.
- With these data, the EPA would be able to establish quantitative "environmental baselines"--critical for efforts to measure adequately the success or failure of pollution abatement efforts.

- The EPA would be able--in concert with the states--to set and enforce standards for air and water quality and for individual pollutants.
- Industries seeking to minimize the adverse impact of their activities on the environment would be assured of consistent standards covering the full range of their waste disposal problems.
- As states developed and expanded their own pollution control programs, they would be able to look to one agency to support their efforts with financial and technical assistance and training.

After conducting hearings during that summer, the House and Senate approved the proposal. The agency's first Administrator, William Ruckelshaus, took the oath of office on December 4, 1970.

## EPA Celebrates National Pesticide Safety Education Month

During the month of February, EPA celebrates National Pesticide Safety Education Month to raise awareness for pesticide safety education and share best practices for using pesticides safely in and around your home. Reading the label every time you use a pesticide is key to ensuring you are using the pesticide correctly and keeping yourself and your family safe. EPA assesses the risks and benefits of all pesticides sold and distributed in the United States and requires instructions on each pesticide label for how to use the pesticide safely.

Here are more tips to follow for all pesticides:

- Store pesticides in their original containers with proper labels.
- Store pesticides out of the reach of children and pets, preferably locked up.
- Use the amount specified on the label. Using more will not be more effective and may harm you, your loved ones, and the environment.
- Wash hands with soap and water after using a pesticide. Wash clothes that have been in contact with pesticides immediately and separately from other items.
- Don't let children and pets enter sprayed areas while they are still wet.
- Keep pesticides away from food and dishes.

Did you know [disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#) are pesticides regulated by EPA? As consumers, it's easy to forget that common household products like antimicrobials, weed killers and insect repellents are pesticides and should be used with proper precautions. EPA supports projects like the [National Pesticide Information Center](#) (NPIC) to educate pesticide applicators, handlers, and farmworkers on working safely with, and around, pesticides.

National Pesticide Safety Education Month also recognizes the efforts of land-grant [Pesticide Safety Education Programs \(PSEPs\)](#) as they teach pesticide safety across the country to reach workers and special communities. Through a [cooperative agreement](#) with the eXtension Foundation, EPA supports the work of PSEPs to provide workshops and educational tools to approximately 869,000 certified pesticide applicators in a variety of languages and help them meet certification requirements. An additional 2 million people are reached through pesticide safety education programs, including pesticide educators, farm workers and inner-city and rural communities.

Learn more today about pesticide safety by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides>.

## What is National Radon Action Month?

January is National Radon Action Month. The aim of National Radon Action Month is to increase the public's awareness of radon, promote radon testing and mitigation, and advance the use of radon-resistant new construction practices.

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the decay of uranium in the ground. Nearly all soils contain some naturally occurring uranium. Radon seeps up from the soil into buildings where it can accumulate to high levels. Since radon is invisible and odorless, dangerous levels can exist indoors without occupants knowing. Testing is the only way to know the radon level in your home or school. Exposure to radon causes an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths annually. After smoking, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer. However, affordable measures effective in reducing radon indoors are available, and when employed can prevent radon-induced lung cancer and save lives.

The National Radon Action Plan (NRAP): A Strategy for Saving Lives sets out strategies to drive the changes needed to reduce exposure to radon. Strategies include requiring radon testing and reduction systems as a standard practice in housing finance and insurance programs, and institutionalizing radon risk reduction through building code requirements. This collaborative strategy aligns federal efforts with those of other national organizations dedicated to lowering radon exposure: the American Lung Association (ALA), American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST), the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), Cancer Survivors Against Radon (CanSAR), the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN), Citizens for Radioactive Radon Reduction, the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD), the Environmental Law Institute (ELI), and the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH). In addition to EPA, the federal partners are the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The NRAP|2021–2025 sets a goal for the nation to find, fix and prevent high indoor radon levels in 8 million buildings by 2025 and prevent 3,500 lung cancer deaths per year. Under this Plan, leaders from across multiple sectors are working together to plan, guide and sustain nationwide action to prevent exposure to radon.

For more information and to learn more about the NRAP Leadership Council's goal areas, strategies for action and target outcomes, please visit: [NRAP|2021-2025 on RadonLeaders.org](https://www.radonleaders.org/nrap-2021-2025).

## 2023 Clean School Bus Rebates Overview **Open**

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 authorizes EPA to offer rebates to replace existing school buses with clean and zero-emission (ZE) models. The 2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Rebates process includes [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) account registration, rebate application submission, review and selection by EPA, selectees will then submit purchase orders to request payment and then receive payment, which is followed by new bus delivery, existing bus replacement, and project close out. **The program guidance and application process differ from prior EPA school bus rebate programs, so please review the summary of program requirements and the detailed Program Guide before proceeding.**

This competition will be open until January 31, 2024, at 4:00 pm ET. More information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-rebates#overview>

And continue to monitor the webpage because there will be another school bus rebate competition in fall of 2024.

## Upcoming Funding Opportunity to Address Air Pollution at Schools

Under the Inflation Reduction Act, EPA is slated to open a grant competition for \$37.5 million dollars in December 2023. During the competition, eligible applicants include states, Tribes, territories, local government, education agencies, and non-government organizations. The funding will be provided for grants and other activities to monitor and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions at schools in low income and disadvantaged communities. The grant competition will close in March 2024. You can keep up with this competition and all other EPA competitive grants at <https://www.epa.gov/invest/epa-funding-announcements-bipartisan-infrastructure-law-and-inflation-reduction-act>

## Upcoming Funding Opportunity for Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles

Under the Inflation Reduction Act, EPA is slated to open a grant competition for \$1 billion dollars in competitive grants in early spring 2024. Eligible applicants include a state; a municipality; an Indian Tribe; a nonprofit school transportation association; and eligible contractors, defined as a contractor that has the capacity, (A) to sell, lease, license, or contract for service zero-emission vehicles, or charging or other equipment needed to charge, fuel, or maintain zero-emission vehicles, to individuals or entities that own, lease, license, or contract for service an eligible vehicle; or (B) to arrange financing for such a sale, lease, license, or contract for service. Funding will be provided to help Tribal, state, and local governments and other entities offset the cost of replacing heavy-duty Class 6 and 7 commercial vehicles with zero-emission vehicles, deploy supporting infrastructure, and train and develop the necessary workforce. At least \$400 million must go to areas not meeting national air quality standards. You can keep up with this competition and all other EPA competitive grants at <https://www.epa.gov/invest/epa-funding-announcements-bipartisan-infrastructure-law-and-inflation-reduction-act>



## Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators

EPA recognizes outstanding K through 12th grade teachers who integrate environmental education through innovative, place based and experiential learning approaches and use the environment as a context for learning in public school programs across the country.

**Recognition: Teacher awardees will receive an award of up to \$2,500 to be used to further the recipient's professional development. The teacher's local education agency will also receive an award of up to \$2,500 to fund environmental educational activities and programs.**

### Eligibility Requirements:

- Teach K-12 on a full-time basis in a public school that is operated by a local education agency, including schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education.
- Hold a current teaching license from the state (or valid reciprocity from the state for a license from another state).
- Have at least 5 years of K-12 teaching experience, including at least 3 years of teaching an environment-based curriculum or environmental education.
- Anticipate a classroom teaching assignment involving environmental education for the upcoming school year.
- Be a citizen of the United States, its territories, or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency.
- Have not been a recipient of the award in the past 5 years.

**Applications are due January 15, 2024.**

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators program is sponsored by the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in partnership with the U.S. EPA.

**To apply, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators>**

# Children's Environmental Health

**Schools Apply Now!**

## Climate Resilient Schools Program

EPA is now accepting Letters of Interest to the 2024 [Climate Resilient Schools program](#).

During this program, EPA and a contractor will provide technical assistance to up to four school districts to support climate-resilient school buildings.

Whether your community is impacted by hurricanes, floods, or other climate risks, Climate Resilient Schools will help school districts gather feedback, identify needs and gaps, and create a plan to target and prioritize school infrastructure upgrades – all to help schools stay open safely – or re-open quickly and safely – despite increasing climate events.



### How to Apply

School districts, state and local governments, and Tribes are welcome to apply. See the ["Request for Letters of Interest"](#) pdf for details about the program and how to submit a letter.

**Applications are due January 19, 2024.**



EPA will evaluate letters based on the criteria in the request and choose up to four school districts in early 2024. The pilot will last for approximately one calendar year, culminating in a personalized action plan.

Please note – this program is not a grant, and funding will not be given directly to school districts or state/local/Tribal governments.

### Questions?

Email [EPAChildren@epa.gov](mailto:EPAChildren@epa.gov).

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Protecting human health  
and the environment.



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## ODDS AND ENDS

### Upcoming Newsletter

### Contact

### Feedback

### Disclaimer



In our next issue, the March 2024 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will highlight the following: Earth Day, Food Waste Recovery Month, Environmental Education Week, and Drinking Water Week to name a few.

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) for Healthy Schools at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

We would love your feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

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