

CUBS 5, CARDINALS 3

TIED AT THE TOP

In his Wrigley debut as a Cub, Jose Quintana helps champs catch the Brewers with a 5-3 win over the Cardinals.

Paul Sullivan: "Theo vs. Hahn" is just one of the off-the-field matchups in the City Series, which begins Monday.

Chicago Sports



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Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

"This case should be a slam-dunk. Nobody is willing to pull the trigger to enforce the law."

— Eric Schaeffer, executive director of the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project and former EPA enforcement official



E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

EPA inspectors have documented hundreds of violations of federal air pollution standards at the Indiana Harbor Coke Co.

Crackdown on air polluter stalls under Trump's EPA

East Chicago coke plant cited 6 times since 2010, but watchdog agency holds off on filing lawsuit

BY MICHAEL HAWTHORNE | Chicago Tribune

During a stop in East Chicago three months ago, Scott Pruitt vowed that cleaning up the low-income, predominantly African-American and Latino city would be one of his top priorities as head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But as contractors spend the summer digging up dozens of contaminated yards

near abandoned industrial sites in the northwest Indiana city, the EPA has stalled its crackdown on a company still operating nearby that is a major contributor to chronically dirty air in the community and the broader Chicago area.

Before Pruitt took office in February, inspectors from the EPA's Chicago office had documented

hundreds of violations of federal air pollution standards at the Indiana Harbor Coke Co., which bakes coal into high-carbon coke for steel mills on a sprawling man-made peninsula jutting from the southwest shore of Lake Michigan.

More than 100,000 people live within a 5-mile radius of the coke plant, including East Chicago residents whose homes are within a 322-acre area where the EPA's Superfund program is overseeing a long-delayed cleanup.

Among other problems found during the past decade, the EPA says Indiana

Harbor Coke has churned out illegal amounts of lead — the same brain-damaging metal deposited in East Chicago yards by smelters and factories that closed long ago.

The pollution violations at Indiana Harbor Coke are serious enough that the company is on the EPA's watchlist of repeat offenders. Yet the agency has held off filing a lawsuit against the coke plant, and some current and former agency officials are concerned about an overall slowdown of enforcement by an ad-

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State worker tripped up in email probe

Official's personal account source of racist messages

BY RAY LONG AND TODD LIGHTY
Chicago Tribune

State officials are investigating a longtime employee whose personal email address is a source of racist, sexist and anti-gay emails at the center of the Chicago water department's burgeoning scandal, including a fake "Chicago Safari" tour making light of the shootings of children in black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

The state began a review into Frank Capuzi — an investigator with the Workers' Compensation Commission and son of a former Republican state lawmaker — following Tribune inquiries into offensive emails forwarded from his address to a water department boss and others.

The state's actions mark the first time the email scandal has created fresh

headaches for another government body.

"The Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission is currently investigating the highly offensive and inexcusable email messages from one of its employees," said commission spokesman Ben Noble. "After a complete and thorough administrative review, the commission will determine what actions may be appropriate."

Capuzi hung up on a reporter and did not respond to follow-up emails sent to his work and personal addresses. He has worked for the state since 1975 and makes more than \$114,000 per year.

Capuzi, 62, was a longtime GOP committeeman on the West Side, having won the 26th Ward post as recently as 2008 and the 27th Ward at least as far back as the early 1980s, according to records from the Chicago Board of Elections.

The "Chicago Safari" email was among at least

Turn to **Emails**, Page 5

Russia sanctions bill gains steam

Trump said to be open to legislation directed at Moscow

BY RICHARD LARDNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House indicated Sunday that President Donald Trump was receptive to a sweeping Russia sanctions measure, which the House could take up this week, that requires him to get Congress' permission before lifting or easing the economic penalties against Moscow.

Lawmakers are scheduled to consider the sanctions package as early as Tuesday, and the bill could be sent to Trump before Congress breaks for the August recess. The legislation is aimed at punishing Moscow for meddling in the presidential election and its military aggression

in Ukraine and Syria.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the newly appointed White House press secretary, said the administration is supportive of being tough on Russia and "particularly putting these sanctions in place."

"We support where the legislation is now, and will continue to work with the House and Senate to put those tough sanctions in place on Russia until the situation in Ukraine is fully resolved," Sanders said on ABC's "This Week."

Asked about the sanctions almost simultaneously on CNN's "State of the Union," new White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci noted he'd been on the job only for a few days. "You've got to ask President Trump that. My

Turn to **Russia**, Page 10

Offering help instead of handcuffs

Interest grows in police programs that place drug users in treatment

BY JOHN KEILMAN
Chicago Tribune

Two years have passed since the Police Department of Dixon, Ill., began a bold experiment in the face of a spiraling heroin epidemic: Instead of arresting drug users, it would usher them into treatment.

Since then, the program known as Safe Passage has expanded into surrounding counties and placed 170 people into rehab. Police Chief Danny Langloss said



E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Sheryl Eakin is a liaison between Naperville police and drug users who seek treatment through the Police Department.

an informal review of their progress showed that more than half had success in treatment — with the rest of

the community benefiting too.

"In 2016, the number of misdemeanor and felony

drug arrests dropped by 39 percent," he said. "I think that the program plays a big factor in that. Our aggressiveness in pursuing drug offenders hasn't changed; it's that we've helped so many get into treatment, and we know a lot of them are doing well."

Seventy miles away in Elgin, a different picture emerges.

The city's police have offered a similar service since January, advertising it through social and traditional media. But despite a population that is seven times larger than Dixon's, only three people have expressed interest in getting

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Tom Skilling's forecast High 77 Low 63

Chicago Weather Center: Complete forecast on back page of A+E section

\$1.99 city and suburbs, \$2.50 elsewhere 170th year No. 205 © Chicago Tribune





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Pollution violations and citations have landed Indiana Harbor Coke Co. on the EPA's watchlist of "high priority violators," yet the agency has held off filing a lawsuit against the plant.

Multiple citations, no enforcement

Coke plant, from Page 1

ministration that is pushing to cut the EPA's budget by a third, lay off thousands of employees and roll back its regulatory powers.

"This case should be a slam-dunk," said Eric Schaeffer, who resigned in protest as the agency's top enforcement official during the George W. Bush administration and now heads the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project. "I've been told by career staff at the agency that everybody is kind of frozen since Pruitt arrived. Nobody is willing to pull the trigger to enforce the law."

Six legal settlements with polluters have been announced by the EPA since President Donald Trump took office, according to a tally posted on the agency's website. At the same point during the Barack Obama and George W. Bush administrations, the EPA had finalized 12 and 10 cases, respectively.

While it is common for new presidential administrations to put legal matters temporarily on hold, Pruitt has said he plans to shift many of the EPA's responsibilities to the states, which before the agency was created in 1970 often were incapable of holding polluters accountable or unwilling to do so.

Many of Pruitt's official trips and public appearances have highlighted the new administration's willingness to work more closely with companies regulated by the EPA.

"It's sad that a regulatory body of the government of the United States would declare a war on any part of our economy," he told coal miners in Sycamore, Pa., in April. "The regulatory assault is over."

An EPA spokesman declined to make officials available to answer questions about the agency's enforcement actions against Indiana Harbor Coke.

"EPA will carefully review all complaints, and ensure environmental laws are enforced as a part of its commitment to East Chicago," the agency said in a July 14 email.

The facility is owned by Lisle-based SunCoke Energy, a company already under a court-ordered legal settlement with the EPA to clean up two newer coke-making operations in Granite City, Ill., near St. Louis, and Franklin Furnace, Ohio. Like the Indiana facility, both plants emitted excessive amounts of lead, lung-

damaging sulfur dioxide and soot, and other hazardous chemicals, court documents show.

Kyle Bland, SunCoke's director of finance and investor relations, said the company still plans to negotiate an agreement with the EPA to resolve the violations by Indiana Harbor Coke. "We are exploring a number of projects ... to meet our environmental performance standards," Bland said in an interview. He declined to elaborate.

'Environmentally friendly'

When SunCoke's corporate predecessor built 268 giant ovens next to Inland Steel's Indiana Harbor Works in 1998, it marked a new era of production for the coke industry.

Steel mills rely on high-carbon coke to fuel blast furnaces, though U.S. coke production has steadily dwindled as the industry has been roiled by competition from overseas companies and from domestic manufacturers that rely on recycled steel.

The last coke plant in Chicago closed more than a decade ago. In 2015, U.S. Steel shuttered the coke plant that supplied its century-old Gary Works a few miles down the Lake Michigan shore from the East Chicago mills, now owned by ArcelorMittal.

Conventional methods of baking coal into coke generate toxic byproducts, some of which are collected and refined to produce industrial chemicals such as benzene, naphthalene and toluene. But over the years the coke industry often has failed to prevent harmful pollution from leaking into the air.

SunCoke, which sells coke to ArcelorMittal, U.S. Steel and other companies on contract, touts its technology as an "environmentally friendly" alternative. Pollution generated during the long hours of baking coal is converted inside the ovens to gas used to power electric generators next to the company's facilities. The ovens are cheaper and cleaner to operate and employ fewer workers than traditional producers, according to the company's investor presentations.

Yet the EPA has documented pollution violations at SunCoke's plants in Indiana, Illinois and Ohio that involve toxic gases, metals and other pollution leaking from coke oven doors or emitted directly into the air rather than being chan-

neled through pollution-control equipment.

The EPA has cited Indiana Harbor Coke six times since 2010 for violations that date to 2005. In the most recent notice, sent in June 2016, the agency outlined "continuously leaking emissions" from 55 ovens during an inspection a few days earlier and from 14 ovens during a March inspection.

Most of the other coke producers across the nation are on the EPA's watchlist of "high priority violators," meaning they have been subjected to court-ordered cleanups or chronically exceed legal limits on air pollution. All but two of the 15 plants currently in operation were subject to major enforcement cases during the Obama administration, according to EPA records.

Legacy of pollution

Steel mills, oil refineries and chemical plants once operated largely unchecked in East Chicago, a factory town of about 30,000 people that for years featured the slogan "industrial capital of the world" on street signs.

The city's air and water generally are cleaner today. During the past four decades, the EPA has steadily forced companies to curb noxious air pollution and clean up toxic waste, oil and grease dumped into Lake Michigan and area rivers.

But federal scientists have documented how pollution drifting from Northwest Indiana remains a big contributor to dirty air problems in the Chicago area and as far away as Door County, Wis. And the region's legacy of toxic pollution remains a constant concern.

Two East Chicago's schools are near a landfill that contains highly contaminated waste dredged from the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal. Another is next to the West Calumet Housing Complex, a public housing development built on the site of a former lead smelter.

Alarmed by new testing that found high levels of lead throughout the site, East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland ordered the evacuation of West Calumet last year, prompting the EPA to accelerate its cleanup of the surrounding neighborhood.

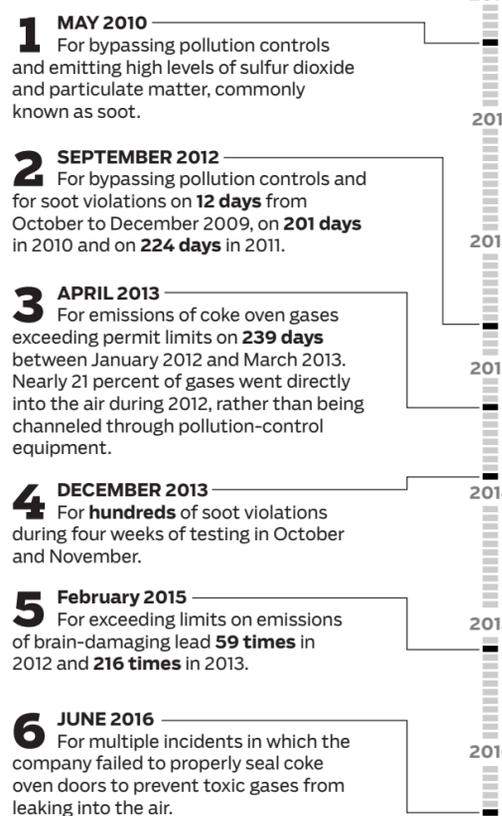
During Pruitt's April visit, he cited the EPA's work as an example of what he calls the Trump administration's "back-to-basics" agenda.

East Chicago coke producer cited for air pollution

The Environmental Protection Agency has cited Indiana Harbor Coke Co. six times since 2010 for pollution violations. Sulfur dioxide can damage the lungs and is an ingredient in smog. Soot triggers lung disease, heart problems and premature death.



THE CITATIONS



SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The agency is refocusing on hazards that led to its creation, Pruitt says, rather than fighting climate change and other emerging threats that were priorities during the Obama administration.

"Please know that it is the EPA's objective — my objective as administrator of the EPA — to come in and make sure the people's health is protected here in East Chicago, and that they can have confidence that their land, their health, will be secure in the long term," Pruitt said after a closed-door meeting

with state and local officials.

In an EPA news release issued the same day, Pruitt said: "I am committed to ensuring that the EPA works with our federal, state and local partners to find solutions that protect the health and safety of East Chicago."

Before Trump tapped Pruitt to head the EPA, Pruitt built his political career fighting the agency, often coordinating his efforts with oil and gas interests that have been big financial supporters of his campaigns. He sued the EPA 14

times as Oklahoma attorney general, seeking to limit the federal government's authority to regulate pollution, and disbanded an environmental enforcement unit created by his predecessor.

During his first months as EPA administrator, Pruitt has moved to roll back tougher fuel economy standards for automakers, overruled agency scientists by denying a petition to ban a brain-damaging pesticide, delayed more stringent limits on lung-damaging smog, and launched efforts to scrap Obama's plans to fight climate change.

Cynthia Giles, who headed the EPA's enforcement office under Obama, said the agency won't have enough resources to investigate polluters or resolve pending cases if the Republican-controlled Congress approves Trump's proposed budget cuts.

The agency's budget would be reduced to \$5.7 billion, its lowest level in 40 years when adjusting for inflation. Spending on enforcement would be dramatically cut back, including efforts to get corporations, rather than taxpayers, to pay for Superfund cleanups in places like East Chicago.

"No money would be available for monitoring equipment, inspections, sample analysis, experts, management of the millions of documents involved in large cases, and many other things," Giles wrote in an email summary. "Whatever EPA enforcement staff are left after massive layoffs would not be able to actually bring enforcement cases."

It is unclear what happens next with Indiana Harbor Coke. Keith Harley, a lawyer who represents environmental groups in the area, is urging federal and state regulators to withhold a new permit for the coke ovens until the pollution violations are resolved. He also called for an "environmental justice" analysis of the cumulative effects of air pollution in the region.

"We have so many problems beyond the Superfund site," said Thomas Frank, a longtime East Chicago resident who leads "toxic tours" of the area and helped organize protests during Pruitt's visit. "Allowing and breaking the law just adds to the unfair burden our community suffers every day."

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