

Trump grants Westlake EPA rule extension

Plant given two more years to comply

BY ZOE LEWIS
FOR THE MESSENGER

CALVERT CITY — President Donald Trump announced that nearly 20 plants, including Westlake Vinyls in Calvert City, will be given a two-year extension to comply with federal guidelines.

In Trump’s proclamation, these facilities will receive regulatory relief from the Biden Administration’s Hazardous Organic National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, also known as the HON Rule. The rule’s objective was to reduce toxic air pollution, including ethylene oxide, chloroprene, benzene, 1,3-butadiene, ethylene dichloride — also known as EDC — and vinyl chloride, from chemical plants, slashing more than 6,200 tons of pollution each year.

“By cutting emissions of these chemicals, the rule will reduce the risks of developing cancer from breathing in toxic air pollutants,” the Environmental Protection Agency states. “In addition, the rule will reduce smog-forming volatile organic compounds by 23,700 tons a year.”

It also states the rule would reduce the number of people who have elevated air toxics-related cancer risks by 96% in overburdened communities near covered plants. Additionally, the HON Rule requires fenceline monitoring for the six

chemicals above. “For all six pollutants, owners and operators must find the source of the pollution and make repairs if annual average air concentrations of the chemicals are higher than a specified action level at the fenceline,” the EPA states.

The EPA required synthetic organic chemical manufacturing plants to have a two-year deadline to begin the monitoring program. However, Trump stated it was not feasible for the plants to begin the monitoring program, resulting in the two-year extension. The proclamation states the reasoning for the extension was due to unavailable technology to implement the program and a risk to national security — plants would have to shut down temporarily before implementing the program, which would be a disruption to “key supply chains, increase dependence on foreign producers and impair our ability to respond effectively in a time of crisis.”

Although the facilities are given more time to comply with the HON Rule, the facilities will comply with EPA standards that were in place before the Biden Administration for two years.

The announcement of the extension comes after a lawsuit was filed in June against Westlake by the Bryant Law Center on behalf of Rhonda Fratzke, a former Calvert City resident,



File photo

Westlake Vinyls one of nearly 20 plants that were given a two-year extension to comply with federal guidelines.

who claims decades of exposure caused her liver cancer. Emily Roark, an attorney and partner at the Paducah law firm, said the extension will be devastating to Fratzke.

“She’ll be devastated, and she probably is that the president has basically said, ‘I’m going to go ahead and give you a little bit more time to poison more people, to put dangerous chemicals into more people’s water, dangerous chemicals into more people’s land, because it gets in the soil, it gets in the water,’” Roark said.

According to the EPA’s 2024 Air Monitoring Study in Calvert City, the federal agency and Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection’s Division for Air Quality found elevated levels of volatile organ-

ic compounds, including EDC, which can result in an increased risk of cancer and other negative health effects to the liver and kidneys.

“The levels of EDC identified at the Calvert City air monitoring sites are estimated to result in elevated cancer risk over a 70-year lifetime of continuous exposure,” the study reads.

The VOCs were measured at three different sites in Calvert City, including Calvert City Elementary, the Johnson Riley Road site and the LWD site, between October 2020 and December 2021.

“None of the VOCs measured were at the levels that would be expected to result in non-cancer or short-term health problems. The highest lifetime cancer risk was found at

the LWD site, which is close to VOC sources at the industrial complex. Lower risks were found at the two other sites. All three sites were above the target cancer risk level referenced by the KDAQ to determine if air emissions reductions are needed,” the study states.

“We want the government to protect us when companies aren’t doing what they should be doing, aren’t acting within the law. Laws are set up to protect us, and when they decide to ignore them, they get fined. They’ve been fined many times, but that’s not enough. When we say, ‘Hey, don’t worry about it. We’ll just give you a little bit more time.’ We should all be upset about that,” Roark said.

Calvert City Mayor

Gene Colburn said the city’s government has no authority over Westlake.

“I don’t really know quite how that affects the health effects in Calvert, but I’m sure they’ll comply. They’re working through the process with the Federal Region Four EPA and the Kentucky Division of Air Quality,” Colburn said.

He said it’s important to him and the rest of the council that community health is a top priority.

“Calvert City government is concerned about our citizens and wants to provide a safe, great place to live and work, no matter what,” Colburn said.

Westlake and the EPA Federal Region Four did not respond to requests for comment as of publication time.

Sweltering summer heat expected to drive higher electricity bills

Providers recommend simple ways to save energy

BY MACKENZIE LIONBERGER
FOR THE MESSENGER

PADUCAH — As the region moves into another scorching week, analysts are projecting higher electricity bills this summer compared to the previous year, according to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association. Some projections show southern states experiencing a larger increase in their utility bills.

The NEADA reported a seasonal average cost of \$778 per household from June through September. Electricity is one of many price spikes in the nation, with consumer prices up 3.5% by June, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Brittany Ringstaff, a Paducah resident, said rising costs and inflation have made this summer immensely expensive for her family.

“Cost of living, the groceries, the gas, and then the last thing you need is a spiked electricity bill,” she said. “I just can’t afford to keep my electricity on. But I’ve managed to do it, working extra hours and getting fans.”

With increases in gas, food and electricity, she said she has worked multiple jobs in addition to her full-time job. Ringstaff uses Jackson Purchase Energy, which allows a two-week payment extension to pay her bills. She said the assistance program has helped her and her family.

Living as a single mother who, in addition to caring for her father with health issues, said keeping the home comfortable is important. However, she has had to make adjustments to keep costs down.

“We cut down two air fryers, and in the peak season, peak hour,” she said. “Even washing and washing clothes and running the dishwasher. Do that in the evening to cut back on it.”

An increase in utility bills during the sum-

mer is not uncommon, according to Andrea Underwood, director of human resources and community relations for Paducah Power System. She said PPS recognizes some customers are struggling, which is why they offer assistance programs for those struggling to pay their bills.

“I think we all feel the pinch; it feels like everything that we utilize these days is more expensive,” she said.

However, she said the nonprofit had to increase rates due to inflation and rising material costs, after holding off for several years.

“We have not had an increase since 2021 in our rates, and inflation just got to the point where we didn’t have a choice,”

Underwood said.

She said PPS had to implement a minimal increase for residential customers using 1000 kilowatt hours a month, adding \$5 extra per month. While she understands the increased cost of living can weigh heavily on many, she said there are useful tips toward saving money each month.

“Cooking, you know, maybe not using the oven or your stove top,” she said. “Turning on that stove heats the house, and then your system is working hard to try to keep it cool.”

Underwood said anything related to the water heater is important to be mindful of. This includes washing clothes on full loads and using

cold water as much as possible. In addition, she recommended using a fan and advised that HVAC systems should be checked and maintained regularly. Wesley Mariner, president of Mariner Mechanical HVAC Inc., said changing filters can reduce energy consumption.

“One of the best things is just keeping the system clean, keeping the coils outdoors cleaned, filters cleaned inside,” Mariner said. “We recommend media filters, large four-inch filters instead of the one-inch standard filters; it

puts less pressure on the ductwork, which is less energy your blower motor uses to move the air.”

Outside of HVAC care, he said raising the temperature on the thermostat can significantly reduce costs. He said 75 degrees on days where temperatures can reach 93 degrees is ideal. He said setting it to lower temperatures wastes energy.

“Each degree is about 5% of usage typically,” he said. “So keeping your thermostat two or three degrees higher could be 10 to 15% savings.”

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MINE NON-COAL MINERAL
Pursuant to Application No. 042-9509 ORG

1. In accordance with 405 KAR 5:032 Sec. 21, notice is hereby given Grace Commercial Park, LLC, 111 Pioneer Industrial Dr, Mayfield 42066, intends to apply for a non-coal surface mining permit for clay affecting 22.57 acres located 0.5 miles west of Hickory in Graves County.

2. The proposed operation is approximately 734' west from the junction of US-45 and Hickory Rd. The latitude is approx. 36.825131 N and the longitude is approx. 88.656023 W.

3. The proposed operation is located on the Hickory USGS 7½ minute quadrangle map in the watershed of an unnamed branch of Cooley Creek. The operation will use the pit method of mining. The surface area is owned by Grace Commercial Park, LLC.

4. The application will be on file for public inspection at the Department for Natural Resources, 300 Sower Blvd, Frankfort, Ky. Written comments, objections, or request for a permit conference must be filed with Director, Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement, 300 Sower Blvd, Frankfort, KY 40601, within 15 days of the date of this advertisement and briefly summarize the issues to be raised at the conference.

The following ordinances were adopted at the July 13, and the July 23, 2026, meetings of the Mayfield City Council. Anyone wishing to view these ordinances in their entirety may do so at the office of the City Clerk at 1108 Cuba Road, Mayfield, Kentucky during normal business hours.

ORDINANCE 6-26

An Ordinance of the City of Mayfield re-zoning Parcel #201.00.12.023.00 of real property within the City of Mayfield from P-1 Professional Occupation District to R-2 Multi-Family Residential.

ORDINACE 7-26

An Ordinance of the City of Mayfield adopting and authorizing the execution of an interlocal agreement between the City of Mayfield, Kentucky and Graves County, Kentucky regarding the use of Opioid Settlement Funds to fund the Police Social Worker position established by the City of Mayfield Police Department.

I do hereby certify the above to be the true and accurate summations of Ordinance 6-26 and Ordinance 7-26 adopted on first reading July 13, and on second reading July 23, 2026, by the Mayfield City Council.

Karen Wilson, City Clerk
City of Mayfield

Certified by Jay Matheny, Attorney for the City of Mayfield

Public Hearing Notice

To all interested citizens of City of Wingo Kentucky:
The Kentucky Department of Local Government (DLG) is accepting application material under the 2026 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. City of Wingo intends to apply for assistance to renovate the fire department. The Wingo Volunteer Rural Fire Department currently operates from an aging facility that no longer meets the operational needs of the department or the community. The project will modernize the aging facility while maintaining operations at its current location. As part of the project, the existing apparatus bay portion of the building will be removed and expanded to better accommodate the department's emergency response vehicles and equipment. The project will also renovate the station's training area, restrooms, and office space to better support department operations and volunteer firefighters. City of Wingo will hold a public hearing prior to submission of the application form. The public hearing will be held on Monday, August 10th, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. CST (10:00 a.m. EST) at the Wingo City Hall located at 9606 US-45N, Wingo, KY 42088. The purpose of this hearing is to obtain views on housing and community development needs, review proposed activities, review the proposed application, and solicit public comments. Technical assistance is available to help groups representing low- and moderate income persons in developing proposals. The following information concerning the CDBG program is available for public inspection at Wingo City Hall located at 9606 US-45N, Wingo, KY 42088 during regular business hours:
A. Amount of funds available and range of activities that may be undertaken.
B. Estimated amounts of funds proposed to be used for activities benefiting persons of low and moderate income.
C. Plans for minimizing displacement of persons as a result of activities associated with CDBG funds and plans for providing assistance to those persons to be actually displaced as a result of CDBG-funded activities.
D. Records regarding the past use of CDBG funds.
E. A summary of other important program requirements.

Comments on Application
A copy of the CDBG application material will be on file Wingo City Hall located at 9606 US-45N, Wingo, KY 42088 for citizens' review and comment during regular business hours from July 29th 2026, though August 10th 2026. Comments on the proposed application may be submitted to the attention of Mayor Charles Shelby until the close of business on August 10th 2026.

Non-Discrimination Clause
City of Wingo does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, or disability. City of Wingo provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation, including auxiliary aids and services, to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs and activities. Any persons requiring special needs assistance or services for non-English speaking residents should contact Mayor Charles Shelby at least five days prior to the meeting. The TDD number for the hearing impaired is 1/800-648-6057.

NOTE: Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Contacts
Department for the Blind 1/877/KYBLIND www.kyblind.state.ky.us
American Printing House 1/800/223-1839 www.aph.org
Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing 1/800/372-2907 www.kcdhh.org
For Interpreter Directory www.kcdhh.org/access/interpdir.html
State Relay TDD umber 1/800/648-6057