SSDA
SERVICE STATION DEALERS OF AMERICA AND ALLIED TRADES

SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

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EPA Waiver Opens Door to Summer Sales of E15 Gasoline

By Roy Littlefield

Consumers across the U.S. still will be able to buy higher-ethanol blend E15 gasoline this summer, the Environmental Protection Agency announced, saving them a little money at the pump but frustrating environmentalists who believe the move potentially harms the air and water.

The emergency waiver issued by the EPA prevents retailers in most states from having to stop selling E15 gasoline on May 1. While the waiver remains in effect only through May 20, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin signaled that he plans to keep issuing waivers through Sept. 15, the date when the federal government typically would allow E15 sales in all states again.

Most gasoline sold across the U.S. is blended with 10% ethanol, but 15% blends are becoming increasingly common, particularly in the Midwest, where most of the nation's corn is grown. E15 gasoline generally costs at least 10 cents less a gallon than E10 gasoline, but the EPA had previously prohibited its sale during the summer over concerns that its use during the summer driving season could increase smog.

But the EPA has relaxed restrictions on E15, granting a series of short-term waivers in 2022, 2023 and 2024 to allow its sale nationwide through the summer. And last year, the EPA issued a rule allowing year-round sales in eight Midwestern states — Iowa, usually the nation's top corn producer, as well as Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Trump administration officials said the action will lower consumers' costs and give them more choices at the pump while also increasing the demand for corn. They also described it as reducing America's reliance on imported energy.

While the ethanol industry and Iowa officials praised the EPA's action, the Renewable Fuels Association, a trade group for ethanol producers, argued that Congress should approve legislation allowing year-round E15 sales across the U.S.

The Online Edge – What Your Business Needs to Thrive

By: Stephanie Santore, Net Driven

Does your business have an online presence? If so, are you doing all you can to ensure its virtual success? If not, what are you waiting for? Let's take a sneak peek at some statistical findings from the Pew Research Center. According to their most recent studies on the use of internet and technology it was found that:

Roughly three-quarters of Americans, or 77%, now own a smartphone, which nearly doubles the former findings since the Center began its research in 2011.

As of November 2016, nearly three-quarters, or 73% of Americans indicate that they have broadband service at home.

Nearly seven-in-ten Americans now use social media. When the Center started tracking social media adoption in 2005, just 5% of Americans said they used these platforms. Today, 69% of U.S. adults are social media users.

Half the public now owns a tablet computer. When the Center first began tracking tablet ownership in 2010, just 3% of Americans owned a tablet of some kind.

As you can see, now more than ever before, an online presence for your business is significant. And not just any online presence, but a quality one that provides a sense of credibility and legitimacy, turning its visitors into leads and sales, and contributing to the success of your business.

First impressions matter. If your business has a website, rest assured that internet users are navigating to it to formulate their opinion, to see what other people have to say about you, and to "screen" shop your services and products, which is much like window shopping, but with the ease of never having to actually visit your business's location.

Your business can now be accessible to the masses thanks to technology. Therefore, it's vital to have a way for potential clients to find you with the swipe of their fingertip and also to ensure you have a website that makes a good impression.

So, how do you go about trying to meet your customers' needs online?

Let's Talk Internet Marketing Best Practices

There are several factors that play into the creation of a well-made website that will help your business's online presence generate traffic and rank effectively:

Design & Layout

Visual presentation plays an important role in the functionality of a website. A high-performing website will provide a positive user experience. It helps to have a responsive web design. What makes a website responsive? Responsive design helps to generate leads and sales without any limitations based on user devices. So, customers can find your automotive service site on their tablet, smartphone, smart watch, etc., viewing your website efficiently from any screen size.

Content

Content is the reason why visitors come to a site. They are seeking information about your business and its services. The key is to provide relevant content that is easy for visitors to digest. Too much or too little and your visi-

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NET DRIVEN

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tors might go elsewhere to find what they're looking for. Check out what Moz has to say about content regarding search engine ranking. By providing unique content that moves beyond self- promotion and is easily digestible to the user, your website offers valuable information.

Calls to Action

Calls to action within a site's content and design come in the form of clickable links or custom buttons. It entices a visitor to take action beyond the page they are on, an action like submitting a form, requesting a quote, purchasing a product, or even just clicking a link that leads to another page with relevant information. Through a CTA, a user moves to take a specific action that will benefit your business. And action is what it's all about.

Credibility

A business with an online footprint is a business that can be found, recognized, and confided in.

From building a solid and consistent brand across all channels, to maintaining an active social media presence, gaining positive reviews, managing your online reputation with products like Net Driven's Reputation Management.

Mobile Viewability

More and more people are looking at your site from a mobile phone or web enabled device. It seems like anything with a screen and a microchip in it is capable of getting on the internet these days.

Make sure your site is viewable on a mobile internet enabled device.

Search Engine Optimization

At Net Driven, we drive the traffic that drives your business! It begins with a website that keeps local search in mind.

A strong SEO foundation puts proven strategies to work and improves your ability to get found.

From understanding searcher behavior to using tested best practices, the SEO team at Net Driven works hard to ensure that your site has all of the key ingredients for SEO success. Look to us for:

Keyword research performed for your business and target geographic

Optimized meta tags for click through success

Relevant industry content

Local directory management

SEO-friendly site architecture

and more!

Don't have a website yet? What are you waiting for?!

Talk to a representative from Net Driven today and ask about how we can help you create a website that not only generates traffic, but turns your traffic into leads and sales!

Net Driven should be your choice for all your automotive internet marketing needs.

Contact us today!

Sources:

http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/12/evolution-of-technology/

Tallgrass to Build New Permian-to-Rockies Pipeline, Targets 2028 Startup

Tallgrass has secured anchor shipper precedent agreements for a proposed pipeline that will move natural gas from the Permian Basin to the Rockies Express Pipeline and other delivery points.

The binding transportation commitments are enough to support the pipeline's construction, pending regulatory and corporate approvals. The company is targeting an in-service date in late 2028.

An open season will follow, giving other potential shippers the chance to subscribe to firm transportation service. The proposed line is designed for up to 2.4 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) of capacity, with the final volume contingent on commitments made during the open season.

Updated BLM Policy Streamlines Oil, Gas Leasing Process

The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management has revised leasing policies to shorten land parcel reviews for oil and natural gas leasing from up to 15 months to six and open more public land for development.

Officials say the streamlined process will support job creation, strengthen energy security and help lower domestic energy costs.

Energy Department Proposes to Cut 47 Rules in 'Largest Deregulatory Effort in History', The Hill

The Energy Department has announced proposals to cut dozens of energy efficiency and other rules in what it is describing as the "'largest deregulatory effort in history."

The department plans to ax a long list of efficiency regulations, including those pertaining to stoves, ovens, showerheads, clothes washers, dishwashers and microwaves.

The rules also apply to a smattering of other policies ranging for guidelines under which the department buys oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to nondiscrimination requirements for grant recipients.

This step does not immediately get rid of the regulations but launches that process.

"While it would normally take years for the Department of Energy to remove just a handful of regulations, the Trump Administration assembled a team working around the clock to reduce costs and deliver results for the American people in just over 110 days," Energy Secretary Chris Wright said in a written statement.

"Thanks to President Trump's leadership, we are bringing back common sense — slashing regulations meant to appease Green New Deal fantasies, restrict consumer choice and increase costs for the American people. Promises made, promises kept," Wright added.

Republicans generally have criticized energy and water efficiency standards as limitations on consumer choice. Supporters of these standards, however, have described them as a win-win in which customers can help the planet and save money on their monthly bills.

"If this attack on consumers succeeds, President Trump would be raising costs dramatically for families as manufacturers dump energy- and water-wasting products into the market. Fortunately, it's patently illegal, so hold your horses," said Andrew deLaski, executive director of the Appliance Standards Awareness Project, in a written statement.

He was particularly referring to anti-backsliding provisions in the law that prevent the Energy Department from increasing "maximum allowable energy use" or decreasing "minimum required energy efficiency."

Opinion: Why It's Time for Adaptive Leadership, SmartBrief

In an era defined by rapid change, uncertainty and complexity, the need for adaptive leadership has never been more urgent. Adaptive leadership is about more than just responding to change; it's about anticipating it, shaping it and thriving in its midst. As CEO of The Vanguard Network, I have a front row seat to some of the best executives sharing their insights.

One of the most effective things a leader can do is give people unexpected control over their work and their time. This approach not only empowers teams but also fosters a culture of innovation and resilience, which are critical in times of uncertainty. Leaders must go beyond traditional decision-making frameworks and develop the ability to "see around corners." This means identifying emerging trends, understanding their implications and preparing their organizations to adapt proactively.

The human side of leadership

Adaptive leaders must find the importance of balancing output and effectiveness with a deep understanding of the human side of leadership. Gerard Senehi, President of the Open Future Institute, eloquently states, "A leader who focuses exclusively on output and effectiveness, and doesn't take the human side of things seriously, is almost guaranteed to fail."

This insight underscores the need for leaders to create workplaces that respect individuality, emotions and needs. Adaptive leadership requires a conscious effort to build inclusive environments where employees feel valued and supported. By doing so, leaders can unlock the full potential of their teams and drive sustainable success.

Navigating complexity with grace

The modern business landscape is marked by complexity and competing priorities. Leaders often find themselves caught between opposing forces, such as the need to scale quickly versus the desire to maintain quality and stability.

At times, navigating such tensions is hard. A kind of diversity that I found particularly hard to navigate was between team members who wanted to scale faster and team members who tried to slow down our growth. Both had beautifully thought-out reasons and arguments.

This example highlights the leadership challenge of creating conditions where diverse perspectives can coexist and lead to better decisions. Adaptive leaders must embrace complexity and find ways to harness it for the benefit of their organizations. This often involves fostering open dialogue, encouraging collaboration, and making tough decisions that align with the organization's purpose and long-term goals.

The power of purpose

Purpose is a driving force behind adaptive leadership. Leaders who are guided by a clear sense of purpose are better equipped to inspire their teams and navigate uncertainty. As Senehi explains, purpose "always stretches you to manifest that more and to do it… with more elegance and grace and inclusivity."

Purpose is not just a lofty ideal but a practical tool for decision-making and strate-

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Opinion: Why It's Time for Adaptive Leadership, SmartBrief

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gy. Leaders are encouraged to ask critical questions, such as, "Why are we doing this? How does it make a difference? And how is it aligned with our purpose?" (Jeffrey Nemetz, the founder of Transform Partners). These questions help ensure that actions are aligned with the organization's values and objectives, creating a sense of coherence and direction.

Building resilient teams

Adaptive leadership is not a solo endeavor; it requires the collective effort of resilient teams. Leaders must create environments where individuals feel empowered to contribute their best work and take ownership of their roles. Giving people "unexpected control over their work and their time" can lead to greater engagement and innovation.

Resilient teams are also better equipped to handle the inevitable challenges and setbacks that come with change. By fostering a culture of trust, collaboration and continuous learning, leaders can build teams that are not only adaptable but also capable of thriving in the face of adversity.

The role of feedback

Feedback is a cornerstone of adaptive leadership. Leaders must be willing to seek out and act on tough feedback, even when it's uncomfortable. Nemetz emphasizes the importance of asking hard questions and challenging the status quo: "This is the moment to raise your hand and go, 'Why are we doing this? And how does it make a difference?'"

By creating a culture where feedback is valued and encouraged, leaders can uncover blind spots, identify opportunities for improvement and make more informed decisions. This openness to feedback is a hallmark of adaptive leadership and a key driver of organizational growth.

Embracing the adaptive leadership mindset

Adaptive leadership is not just a skill but a mindset. It requires a willingness to embrace change, navigate complexity and lead with purpose and empathy. Adaptive leaders are those who can "see around corners" and guide their organizations toward a brighter future.

For leaders looking to develop their adaptive leadership skills, Seeing Around Corners is an invaluable resource. Its collection of real-world lessons, actionable insights and thought-provoking questions provides a road map for navigating the challenges of today's business environment. By embracing the principles of adaptive leadership, leaders can not only survive but thrive in an ever-changing world.

Now is the time to step up, adapt and lead with vision and purpose. As the contributors to Seeing Around Corners remind us, the future belongs to those who are willing to see beyond the horizon and take bold, decisive action.

US LNG Exports Surge to New Highs on Strong Buying by Europe, Reuters

U.S. exports of LNG so far this year have surged by over 20% from the same period a year ago, driven mainly by purchases by European nations, which accounted for over three quarters of total U.S. orders.

Total U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments during January through April were 34.6 million metric tons, according to trade intelligence firm Kpler, which was by far the highest volume total ever for that period.

European nations accounted for 26.5 million tons or 77% of the total volumes shipped out by U.S. sellers.

Purchases by Europe were up 49% from the first four months of 2024, and suggest that European gas users and traders were at least partly attempting to appease U.S. President Trump by snapping up U.S. cargoes during tariff negotiations.

The highest European gas-fired power generation total in four years during the opening quarter of 2025 also likely supported the region's robust LNG imports.

Europe's relatively low gas inventories - which are currently around 33% below year-ago levels - also likely fuelled the strong LNG import appetite, and will remain a key driver of regional LNG import interest in the months ahead.

TOP DESTINATIONS

France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were the top three buyers of U.S. LNG during January to April, and together accounted for nearly 35% of total purchases.

France's imports were the highest from the U.S. on record for the January to April period, at 4.8 million tons, while UK and Netherlands volumes were slightly below previous peaks.

Other major Europe-based buyers included Turkey (with a record 3.2 million tons), Spain, Italy and Poland, which all sharply lifted gas-fired power output during the first quarter of 2025 compared to early 2024.

Other notable European buyers included Germany, Belgium, Greece and Lithuania, Kpler data showed.

Europe's utilities and gas storage operators will likely remain regular gas buyers in the months ahead, in order to replenish drawn-down stockpiles during what is traditionally the weakest period for gas use on the continent.

A majority of the purchases for stock building will likely be from pipelined supplies, which are substantially cheaper than LNG cargoes.

However, LNG will likely remain in the mix for spot purchases by power genera-

US LNG Exports Surge to New Highs on Strong Buying by Europe, Reuters

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tors, who have been grappling with reduced clean energy supplies so far in 2025 due to low wind speeds and reduced hydro power output.

ASIAN WILT

While Europe's LNG imports shot to new highs so far in 2025, Asia's purchases have headed in the opposite direction.

Asia's total LNG imports of 4.91 million tons for the January through April window were the lowest for that period since 2019, and were 41% down from the same months last year.

Relatively high international gas prices - especially compared to thermal coal - helped to curb Asian interest in LNG imports for far in 2025, although Asian spot LNG prices recently sank to 11-month lows amid weak buying interest.

Sluggish economic activity across Asia - exacerbated by the new tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump - is expected to suppress overall industrial activity throughout Asia over the near term, and with it demand for gas.

Outside of Asia, Egypt and Jordan both lifted U.S. LNG imports to a record for the January to April window, while purchases by Central and South American nations were down by around 22% from the same months in 2024.

MIXED OUTLOOK

Going forward, Europe will likely remain the dominant destination for U.S. LNG cargoes, especially while European nations are still trying to appease the Trump administration by increasing imports of U.S. products.

Over the longer run, any extended spell of weak buying by Asia could become a major concern for U.S. gas exporters, as a protracted period of declining gas use there could further derail plans to build up gas infrastructure in the region.

That could leave U.S. exporters overly reliant on Europe for LNG sales, and leave them vulnerable to a sharp drop in international demand if Europe's energy system continues to prioritise clean energy supply development over fossil fuels.

The opinions expressed here are those of the author, a market analyst for Reuters.

Trump's Energy Department Unveils Broad Rule Changes Aimed at Cutting Red Tape, Reuters

The U.S. Department of Energy proposed to eliminate or change more than 40 regulations and programs to align them with President Donald Trump's efforts to relax federal rules and gut diversity initiatives.

The moves will save U.S. taxpayers $11 billion, the agency said in a statement, calling it the first step in its largest-ever deregulatory effort.

"Thanks to President Trump's leadership, we are bringing back common sense - slashing regulations meant to appease Green New Deal fantasies, restrict consumer choice and increase costs for the American people," Energy Secretary Chris Wright said in the statement.

The proposals were posted on a public government website and will be published in the Federal Register later this week.

Many of the rule changes seek to promote Trump's energy dominance agenda, which seeks to boost production and use of domestic fossil fuels. One rule change allows electronic submissions of applications for natural gas imports and exports, and another simplifies the permit process for transmitting electric energy abroad.

They also target federal energy conservation programs by removing water and energy efficiency standards for faucets, commercial ice makers, microwave ovens, clothes washers and other appliances. They also remove products including portable air conditioners, fans and blowers from coverage under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which directs DOE to set efficiency standards for certain consumer goods.

Trump has often criticized energy- and water-efficient appliances, saying they do not work well and limit consumer choice.

The agency is also rescinding several rules that seek to protect against discrimination on the basis of age, gender and disability. It is also eliminating a rule to support minority businesses seeking grants or contracts.

Those changes are part of Trump's broad effort to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives across the federal government.

Trump's Tweets Suggest he Favors Oil Prices in $40-$50 Range: Goldman Sachs, Seeking Alpha

Goldman Sachs analysts said U.S. President Donald Trump prefers oil prices to hover between $40 and $50 a barrel, based on a review of hundreds of his social media posts.

In a report authored by Daan Struyven and others, the bank noted that Trump has commented on oil and energy policy nearly 900 times during his presidency.

According to their analysis, the frequency of his oil-related posts tends to drop when West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude prices fall within that $40 to $50 band — suggesting he views that level as desirable.

Trump's influence on oil markets has often played out on platforms like Twitter, where his remarks have touched on everything from OPEC's output strategy to domestic fuel prices and sanctions targeting countries such as Iran.

His administration consistently promoted U.S. energy independence and low energy costs as tools to combat inflation and support economic growth.

The report also highlights a pattern in Trump's commentary: he typically urges lower prices or praises declines when WTI trades above $50 a barrel.

Conversely, when prices dip below $30, his posts often signal support for higher prices — usually in the context of protecting U.S. oil producers.

At the time of the report, WTI was trading just above $63 a barrel, down around 12% since the beginning of the year.

That decline was attributed to the economic uncertainty caused by Trump's trade policies and a quicker-than-anticipated easing of output cuts by OPEC+. However, prices rebounded somewhat following a temporary easing of tariffs between the U.S. and China.

U.S. Oil Companies Spent Less on Interest Over the Last Decade Despite Higher Rates, eia

Higher oil prices, increased drilling efficiency, and structurally lower debt needs have contributed to lower interest expenses for some publicly traded U.S. oil companies over the past decade, despite the level of interest rates across the economy being relatively high.

Based on the published financial reports of 26 U.S. publicly traded oil companies, interest expenses per barrel of oil equivalent (BOE)—a measure that accounts for crude oil, hydrocarbon gas liquids, and natural gas production—in 2024 were about $1.50/BOE, or around 6% of production expenses. In real dollar terms and as a share of production expenses, interest expenses are lower than they were before the pandemic, even though general interest rates are now higher.

Although interest expenses typically represent a small portion of production expenses—those associated with labor, materials, and the costs of extracting and storing oil and other commodities—their variability can fluctuate with macroeconomic conditions. For example, a rapid decline in crude oil prices might lower some production expenses but not interest expenses, which are often fixed throughout the life of a loan. During these times, interest expenses can represent 15% or more of regular production expenses.

The decline in interest expenses may be counterintuitive as interest rates in the United States have generally increased since 2020 and 2021. Short-term interest rates—designated by the federal funds effective rate, which determines the interest rate on overnight bank loans—have reached as high as 5.3% since 2022 and stayed above 4% since then, compared with nearly 0% five years ago.

The Federal Reserve determines the federal funds rate, and the rate serves as a key monetary policy tool to reach the goals of price stability and maximum employment. The federal funds rate affects other interest rates that are determined from market participants' supply and demand for loans, including bank loans, government bonds, and corporate bonds. For example, Moody's Aaa and Baa corporate bond rates represent different bond yields based on creditworthiness.

Oil company interest expense has declined despite higher interest rates because of:

Relatively high oil prices. Crude oil prices increased in the years after the pandemic. Higher oil prices bring in more revenue, which means oil companies need to borrow less to fund their capital expenditures and can also pay down debt obligations. In addition, higher oil prices increase the value of a company's proved reserves and reduce the risk of loan default, which may lead to better borrowing terms, such as lower interest rates.

Increased efficiency and cost reduction. Lowering production expenses and improving efficiency increases company profits, which could result in better borrowing terms and lower borrowing costs.

Tempered investment growth and strategy. In recent years, companies have implemented strategies that favor modest capital expenditure growth by targeting fewer but more profitable projects. With this approach, the company may generate more profits even if the company's production growth was small or unchanged. This strategy reduces companies' needs for outside capital, including borrowing.

EPA Chief Zeldin Faces Bipartisan Anger in Senate Over Funding Freeze, Grant Cancellations, AP

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency came under bipartisan criticism over his agency's actions to cancel billions of dollars in congressionally approved spending to address chronic pollution in minority communities and jump-start clean energy programs across the country.

Nearly 800 grants were awarded by former President Joe Biden's administration under the 2022 climate law, which directed the EPA to spend $3 billion on grants to help low-income and minority communities improve their air and water and protect against climate change. The law allocated another $20 billion under a so-called green bank program to finance clean energy and climate-friendly projects nationwide.

Funding for both programs was abruptly terminated by the Trump administration in actions that Democrats have denounced as illegal and unconstitutional.

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin has illegally withheld, or impounded, climate-law funding despite a decades-old law that explicitly prohibits such actions by the executive branch. Repeated court rulings, including by the Supreme Court, support the power of Congress to set federal spending levels.

Zeldin's budget maneuvers "endanger communities by making it harder to address pollution and climate chaos," Merkley said at a hearing.

Varied approaches to questioning the EPA chief

Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, chair of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the environment, also criticized Zeldin, saying funding freezes approved by his agency — including to grants intended for rural communities in Alaska — were "somewhat indiscriminate."

Murkowski questioned whether severe budget cuts proposed by President Donald Trump were "serious." Many of the proposals, such as an 88% cut to a state revolving fund for clean water, are likely to be reversed by Congress, she said. The EPA's approach under Zeldin is "problematic," Murkowski added. "EPA has not adhered to our guidelines and has been largely unresponsive to questions," she said.

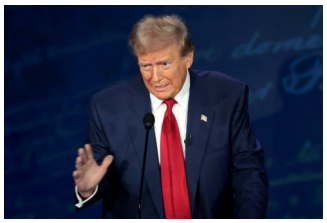
Zeldin told Murkowski she has a special phone number for his office and can call him any time. His exchanges with Democrats were less friendly.

"So you understand that when you impound funds, you're violating the law?" Merkley asked Zeldin, a former New York congressman who took over at EPA in January.

"No, Senator, we are going to follow all statutory obligations,'' Zeldin replied. "We absolutely disagree with you very strongly.''

Asked under what authority the money was being withheld, Zeldin cited "policy priorities" under Trump that differ from Biden-era views.

Trump Touts Saudi Relationship as "Bedrock of Security and Prosperity" Amid $600 Billion Investment Deal, CBS



President Trump delivered remarks at a U.S.-Saudi investment summit as the White House announced a $600 billion investment from Saudi Arabia, including what it touted as the "largest defense sales agreement in history."

In Saudi Arabia, the president held up the country as an example for the Middle East, saying it's achieved a "modern miracle the Arabian way," bashing efforts of "western intervention" and blasting former President Joe Biden.

Mr. Trump and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also known as MBS, announced multiple economic and defense agreements, an indication of Mr. Trump's intent to deepen U.S.-Saudi ties, despite long-held concerns from State Department reports and human rights groups about its restriction of civil liberties, political rights and women's rights. The Saudis hosted a dinner in the city of Dir'iyah in honor of Mr. Trump.

Speaking at the Saudi-U.S. Investment Forum, the president said it's a "tremendous honor" to be invited back to Saudi Arabia, where his first foreign trip took place in 2017, and called bin Salman a "friend." U.S. intelligence agencies believed bin Salman ordered the killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018, but the U.S. determined that he has immunity due to his role as Saudi prime minister.

"The U.S.-Saudi relationship has been a bedrock of security and prosperity," Mr. Trump said. "Today, we reaffirmed this important bond, and we take the next steps to make our relationship closer, stronger and more powerful than ever before."

Mr. Trump also has personal business ties to Saudi Arabia. Last year, the Trump Organization announced plans for the development of a Trump Tower in Jeddah, a major Saudi city along the Red Sea. Eric Trump, the president's son and the executive vice president of the Trump Organization, told Reuters that the Trump Organization also has plans for a Trump-branded property in Riyadh.

Mr. Trump said Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital, "is becoming not just a seat of government, but a major business, cultural and high-tech capital of the entire world."

"It's crucial for the wider world to know this great transformation has not come from western intervention or flying people in beautiful planes giving you lectures on how to live and how to govern your own affairs, no," he said.

"The gleaming marbles of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi were not created by the so-called nation builders, neocons or liberal nonprofits like those who spent trillions and trillions of dollars failing to develop Kabul, Baghdad, so many other cities," he said. "Instead, the birth of a modern Middle East has been brought by the people of the region themselves. ... In the end, the so-called nation builders wrecked far more nations than they built, and the interventionalists were intervening in complex societies that they did not even understand themselves."

Specifically, the president and crown prince signed agreements for judicial cooperation between the Ministry of Justice in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Department of Justice, coordination between the Pentagon and Saudi Ministry of Defense for modernization and development of the capabilities of the Saudi armed forces; and an international partnership program between the Saudi Ministry of Interior and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

EPA Tells Scientists to Apply for New Jobs Within the Agency, The Hill

Political leaders at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have told scientists there to apply to new jobs, implying that those who do not may be fired, according to an official with a union representing the agency's employees.

"People in ORD [the Office of Research and Development] were told to apply for these positions," said Joyce Howell, executive vice president of the union.

Howell recalled that the comment came from political officials during a meeting with EPA staffers. Someone asked during the meeting what would happen to those who did not apply to new positions and was told "these are your opportunities," she said, adding that the implication was that those who did not apply to or get a new position would be fired.

Howell said that employees were told 155 jobs were opening up in the agency's chemicals office, 300 were opening up in the administrator's office and 50 would open up in the air and radiation office, while an unspecified number would open up in the water office.

But reports have indicated that some 1,500 people work in ORD.

Howell warned that if the rest of these jobs are lost, the agency could be losing not only "independent science" but also the "expertise" of those staffers.

Chris Frey, who led ORD under the Biden administration, raised concerns about the future of the research office — and what it may mean for the American people.

"Without the evolution of the science, … we would see a difference that EPA will do less to protect public health and the environment," Frey said.

"We've seen announcements from the administrator of EPA to roll back basically all of the major standards that were set during the Biden administration for air pollution and water quality, contaminants in land and chemicals in commerce, and all of those decisions are made based on an assessment of what is the harm to public health and the environment," he added.

Asked about whether employees in the agency's science arm were instructed to apply for the new job openings, an EPA spokesperson said via email that "All EPA employees were provided this opportunity via an internal hiring authority."

"The May 2 announcement was the next phase of organizational improvements and part of a larger, comprehensive effort to restructure the entire agency," the spokesperson said.

"The Office of Research and Development was not part of this announcement. EPA's Talent Hub went live Friday night (May 2) with new and open positions in offices im-

EPA Tells Scientists to Apply for New Jobs Within the Agency, The Hill

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pacted by this phase of reorganization … All EPA employees are eligible to apply," continued the email.

The Hill also obtained an internal email, first reported by E&E News, that appears to detail changes to the agency's Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment, which conducts studies to examine the impact of exposures to chemicals on people and ecosystems.

An email signed by the director and deputy director of the center says, "Lab research will wind down over the next few weeks as we will no longer have the capability to acquire supplies and materials."

"We requested for an exemption for journal articles but have not heard if that is approved," the internal email states. "ORD is shutting down their laboratory activities. We are unsure if these laboratory activities will continue post-reorganization."

The EPA, however, described this email as "factually inaccurate."

"No ORD funding requests to [the Office of Mission Support] have been denied. In fact, we have approved numerous contracts for ongoing ORD research dating back to January," an agency spokesperson said.

"At ORD and throughout the agency, EPA is continuing research and labs to advance the mission of protecting human health and the environment," the spokesperson continued.

The alleged changes are coming in the wake of a broad reorganization announced by the agency earlier this month, part of sweeping changes enacted by the Trump administration.

EPA said that it would be "shifting its scientific expertise and research efforts" to its program offices, including those that make decisions about whether to protect air and water and how to regulate chemicals.

The agency said at the time that this phase in its reorganization does not include layoffs, but that it hoped to eventually get staffing levels down to where they were in the Reagan era — meaning that around 1,000 to 3,000 of the agency's 15,000 positions could ultimately go.
Democratic staff of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee reviewed a plan earlier this year indicating that the EPA has considered eliminating ORD entirely.
The Trump administration has indicated that it wants to cut jobs at agencies across the board — and that it intends to carry out mass firings across the federal government. A federal judge ordered a temporary pause in the administration's plans. An EPA spokesperson declined to say whether its reorganization efforts will be impacted by that order, saying the agency doesn't comment on pending litigation.

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