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Trump administration isn't doing enough to protect the air we breathe, N.J. Attorney General alleges

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New Jersey filed two lawsuits against the Trump administration Tuesday, alleging that the federal government isn't doing enough to protect residents from out-of-state polluters.

The lawsuits said the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has sat idly by while dangerous emissions from around the region continually threaten residents.

Regulators have "fallen down on the job," said State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal. "Out-of-state power plants continue to operate without any regard for the ozone."

The complaints come on the heels of a recent court ruling that reached a similar conclusion.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit found that the EPA had violated the federal Clean Air Act, when it lessened the responsibility upwind states faced for air pollution that travelled downwind. The agency now has to create a new rule to protect downwind states.

Enesta Jones, a spokesperson for the agency, said she could not comment on pending litigation.

Coal plants are almost extinct in the Garden State, and officials said New Jersey has strict limits on nitrogen oxides, which are key ingredients in ozone pollution — better known as smog.

However, the state fails to meet federal ozone standards, according to the state Attorney General's Office, and the American Lung Association recently gave ten counties "F" grades for their ozone levels.

Tuesday's lawsuits took aim at nine states that New Jersey blames for much of that pollution.

In the first, the state argued that the EPA hadn't done enough to force Pennsylvania and Virginia to create so-called "Good Neighbor" plans to deal with their nitrogen oxide emissions.

The second lawsuit alleged that pollution pouring out of more than than 300 sites, some as far away as Illinois, lacked protections already required in New Jersey.

The EPA has already denied an earlier request by New York to more closely regulate those sites, many of which are coal plants.

New Jersey partnered with Connecticut in the first lawsuit and New York in the second. Both were filed in D.C. District Court.

NJ Advance Media Staff Writer Michael Sol Warren contributed to this report.