

Society of Environmental Journalists

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Scott Pruitt, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

On Sept. 3, 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency singled out an Associated Press reporter for his coverage of its response to Hurricane Harvey. The EPA press release reflects an agency eager to attack journalists who write factually correct news stories it doesn't like.

The release accused reporter Michael Biesecker of producing an "incredibly misleading story," which noted that EPA hadn't inspected flooded Houston Superfund sites that could be releasing contaminants. The EPA accused Biesecker of "reporting from the comfort of Washington" and of leaving out that steps had been taken to secure the sites before flooding.

In fact, the AP had reporters in Houston who visited the Superfund sites that the agency said it hadn't been able to inspect because of flooding. By omitting that information, the EPA committed the very sin of which it accused the AP.

Instead, the agency sought to discredit the story by smearing Biesecker. It brought up an earlier, unrelated story he wrote that required a correction. The agency claimed it was proof Biesecker "had a history of not letting the facts get in the way of his story."

This incident follows the EPA's attempt to inflate two corrections to a *New York Times* story into a scandalous journalistic failure. Yet the agency chose not to contest that story's main thrust - that scientists feared the Trump administration would censor or water down a draft climate change report.

The Society of Environmental Journalists calls on the EPA to engage constructively with the press and stop attacking journalists for doing their jobs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Magill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BOBBY MAGILL
President
Society of Environmental Journalists

CC: Liz Bowman, Associate Administrator
EPA Office of Public Affairs