

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 5, 2026

Wael Sawan
Chief Executive Officer
Shell USA, Inc.
910 Louisiana Street
Houston, TX 77002

Dear Chief Executive Officer Sawan:

I am writing today urging you to take immediate steps to reduce carbon emissions, which have been directly linked to the increase in wildfires across North America. As communities across the nation endure dangerous air quality and the growing impacts of wildfire smoke, the oil and gas industry must acknowledge its role in intensifying this crisis and take immediate, meaningful steps to reduce emissions.

On July 16, 2026, Chicago recorded an air quality index readings quadruple the previous record set for air quality in Cook County, according to data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).¹ The Chicago Tribune reports that by late afternoon, hazardous concentrations of PM2.5 in the North Shore suburbs reached an index above 900 on a scale that tops out at 500.² This wildfire smoke drifting in from Canada caused Chicago city officials to urge residents to limit time outdoors after air quality deteriorated to unhealthy, and in some places very unhealthy, levels, prompting event cancellations, facility closures, and public health warnings.³ The effects of these wildfires were not isolated to Chicago; the smoke spread across the Midwest and Northeast, affecting major cities including New York City, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Chicago.⁴ New York City experienced severe haze and unhealthy air conditions as smoke blanketed the region,⁵ while several cities recorded some of the worst air quality levels in the world during the event.⁶ Wildfire smoke further deteriorates air quality in these major U.S. cities by releasing fine particulate matter (PM2.5). These particles go deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory tract irritation, reduced lung function, asthma exacerbations, cardiovascular disease, heart failure, and premature death.⁷

Research clearly links wildfires to the heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions of the oil and gas industry. A 2023 study published in the Journal Environmental Research Letters found that 37 per cent of the total burned forest area in Western Canada and the United States between 1986-2021 can be traced back to 88 major fossil

¹ Finnegan Belleau, "Wildfire Smoke from Canada and Minnesota Pushes Air Quality in Illinois to Unhealthy Levels," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 2026, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2026/07/16/wildfire-smoke-air-quality-illinois/>.

² *Id*

³ Darius Johnson and Sara Tenenbaum, "Chicago Air Quality Alert Compounded by Arrival of Wildfire Smoke from Canada, Minnesota," *CBS Chicago*, July 15, 2026, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/chicago-air-quality-alert-compounded-by-arrival-of-wildfire-smoke-from-canada-minnesota/ar-AA27Ympv?ocid=BingNewsSerp>.

⁴ Ben Noll, "Wildfire Smoke Will Worsen in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Through Friday," *The Washington Post*, July 16, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2026/07/16/wildfire-smoke-will-worsen-northeast-mid-atlantic-through-friday/>.

⁵ Dorany Pineda and Jacqueline Ganun, "Wildfires Expose Millions in Midwest, Northeast to Dangerous Smoke: 'Perfect Storm for Really Dry Conditions,'" *CBS News*, July 15, 2026, updated July 19, 2026, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/wildfires-smoke-millions-exposed-midwest-northeast-us/>.

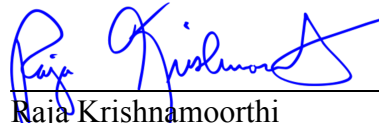
⁶ Ben Noll, "Wildfire Smoke Will Worsen in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Through Friday."

⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Health Effects Attributed to Wildfire Smoke," *Wildfire Smoke and Your Patients' Health*, accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.epa.gov/wildfire-smoke-course/health-effects-attributed-wildfire-smoke-0>

fuel producers and cement manufacturers.⁸ These findings build on previous studies that have quantified the contribution of those same 88 companies to the increase in global temperatures, and others that have shown how a climate-driven "vapor pressure deficit" (VPD), a measure of the atmosphere's drying power, has contributed to the increased area of forest burned in Western Canada and the U.S.⁹ In fact, a recent study estimates that climate change has now doubled the burn area.¹⁰ Wildfires themselves then release more CO₂, which feeds back into climate change, creating a vicious cycle.¹¹ As extreme event attribution methods advance, scientists will be able to draw even clearer connections between fossil fuel emissions and the increasing severity of wildfire events, strengthening the evidence of industry responsibility for the current crisis.¹² Despite this growing body of scientific evidence, reports show that oil lobbyists have pushed for the EPA to exempt the wildfire pollution from federal air quality standards, continuing the history of the oil industry to discount science and silence facts that started in the 1990s.¹³

In your role as an industry leader, Shell USA can make critical progress in reducing the fossil fuel emissions that are driving more frequent and severe wildfires and in putting public health first. The hazardous air conditions experienced in Chicago and other cities show that wildfire impacts are no longer distant or abstract—they are disrupting daily life, harming health, and straining communities right now. These climate-driven fires demand meaningful action before the damage to our forests, our air, and our communities becomes irreversible. I call on you to take accountability, despite decades of industry denial, for your role in exacerbating the wildfires that threaten the health of millions of Americans.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

⁸ Kristina J. Dahl, D. B. Bonfils, et al., "Climate Change Increases the Risk of Extreme Wildfires in the Western United States and Southwestern Canada," *Environmental Research Letters* 18, no. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/acbce8>

⁹ Shingler, Benjamin, "Rise in extreme wildfires linked directly to emissions from oil companies in new study", *CBC*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/wildfires-climate-change-carbon-88-1.6852178>

¹⁰ Beverly E. Law et al., "Anthropogenic Climate Change Contributes to Wildfire Particulate Matter and Related Mortality in the United States," *Communications Earth & Environment* 6 (2025): 336, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02314-0>

¹¹ NASA, "Wildfires and Climate Change", 2025 <https://science.nasa.gov/earth/explore/wildfires-and-climate-change/>

¹² Christopher Flavelle, "National Academies Say Scientists Can Better Link Extreme Weather to Climate Change," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/16/climate/national-academies-extreme-weather-attribution.html>.

¹³ Burns, Rebecca 2023. "Oil Lobby Pushed Pollution Loophole for Wildfire Smoke." *The Lever*, June 8, 2023. <https://www.levernews.com/oil-lobby-pushed-pollution-loophole-for-wildfire-smoke/>; United Nations Development Programme, "What Are Climate Misinformation and Disinformation and How Can We Tackle Them?," *UNDP Climate Promise*, May 1, 2025, <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/what-are-climate-misinformation-and-disinformation-and-how-can-we-tackle-them>.