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EPA Rescinds 2009 Endangerment Finding and Repeals GHG Vehicle Standards: Implications for Electrical Contractors

On February 12, 2026, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a [final rule](#) rescinding the 2009 Endangerment Finding for greenhouse gases (GHGs) under the Clean Air Act and repealing federal GHG emissions standards for new motor vehicles.

The Endangerment Finding had served for more than a decade as the legal foundation for federal regulation of carbon dioxide and other GHG emissions across multiple sectors. Its rescission marks one of the most significant shifts in federal climate regulation since 2009 and materially alters the regulatory framework influencing transportation, energy markets, and infrastructure investment.

Background: The 2009 Endangerment Finding

In 2009, EPA determined that six greenhouse gases “endanger public health and welfare,” triggering regulatory authority under the Clean Air Act. That determination became the legal predicate for:

- Federal vehicle GHG emissions standards
- Power plant carbon regulations
- Methane rules for oil and gas
- Broader climate-related regulatory programs

The finding itself imposed no direct requirements but activated regulatory authority that shaped federal climate policy for more than a decade.

What the New Rule Does

- Rescinds the 2009 Endangerment Finding
- Repeals federal GHG standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles
- Eliminates associated compliance, reporting, and credit programs
- Signals EPA’s position that regulating global climate change requires clearer congressional authorization

The repeal removes federal tailpipe carbon standards but does not automatically eliminate:

- State-level vehicle emissions programs
- Federal fuel economy standards administered by DOT
- Market-driven electrification trends



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EPA's Legal and Policy Rationale

- **Statutory Authority:** EPA argues Congress did not intend Section 202(a)(1) to regulate global climate change in the manner adopted in 2009.
- **Major Questions Doctrine:** Broad climate regulation constitutes a major policy question requiring explicit congressional authorization.
- **Scientific Framework:** EPA contends the 2009 finding relied on generalized global modeling rather than a source-specific domestic risk assessment.
- **Economic Impacts:** The agency emphasizes downstream effects on energy affordability, transportation costs, and industrial competitiveness.

Litigation from states and environmental organizations is expected and could create prolonged legal uncertainty.

Broader Regulatory Implications

Rescinding the Endangerment Finding weakens the legal foundation for multi-sector GHG regulation, including prior vehicle and power-sector rules.

While federal mandates are reduced, state regulators and market actors may assume a more prominent role, increasing geographic variation in emissions policy and infrastructure planning.

Implications for Electrical Contractors and Company Owners

The regulatory shift does not eliminate demand for electrification, grid modernization, or energy infrastructure. Structural drivers remain strong:

- Data center expansion
- Manufacturing reshoring
- Grid reliability and resilience needs
- Distributed energy resource integration
- Building electrification policies

The primary change is where policy risk resides — shifting from federal mandates to state policy and market forces.

Key Considerations

- **Project Pipeline Volatility:** Federally driven vehicle electrification timelines may become less predictable.
- **Utility and Grid Investments:** Capital investment continues, increasingly driven by state commissions, RTOs, and large customers.



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- Building Electrification: State and local codes continue to support panel upgrades and electrification projects.
- Federal Funding vs. Regulation: Infrastructure funding enacted through federal spending laws remains intact.

Special Considerations for Line Contractors

Transmission expansion is driven by structural load growth, data center demand, electrification pressures, and resilience requirements — not solely by EPA mandates.

Regional planning processes continue advancing projects focused on congestion relief, renewables integration, and reliability.

Permitting and siting constraints remain timeline challenges independent of federal GHG policy.

Generation and interconnection needs persist, including:

- Renewable interconnections
- Thermal plant modernization
- Reliability and hardening projects

Distribution systems continue facing pressure from fleet depots, DER integration, storage deployment, and resilience mandates.

Strategic Risk Management

- Prepare for policy volatility and litigation outcomes.
- Emphasize reliability, resilience, and economic value in project proposals.
- Continue workforce and technical development aligned with electrification trends.

Bottom Line

The rescission represents a significant federal policy shift, but long-term electrification continues to require grid expansion and modernization.

For company owners, the imperative is adaptability: manage regulatory uncertainty while remaining positioned to build the infrastructure supporting a steadily electrifying economy.

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