



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

PANDEMIC

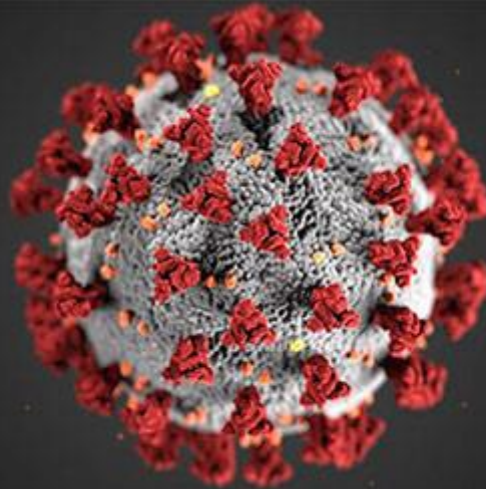


REPORT

As of July 31, 2020



EPA OIG's Response to the **COVID-19** Pandemic



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Inspector General is meeting the new challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic—that is, the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resultant COVID-19 disease—by initiating audits, evaluations, and investigations related to the pandemic's impact on the EPA's and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's missions to protect people, public health, and the environment. We are examining and identifying how the pandemic has affected Agency programs and operations, from water infrastructure worries to air quality enforcement to potential misconduct and criminal activity. We are working with our oversight partners, including other federal OIGs; the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee under the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency; and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, to coordinate our work and address matters of interagency or cross-jurisdictional concern.

Our office recognizes that we are facing unprecedented times and reinforces our commitment to conferring with congressional and Agency leadership; [issuing reports](#); and investigating waste, fraud, and abuse.

Top Pandemic-Related Challenges Facing the EPA

The OIG has identified some [initial challenges](#), as of June 17, 2020, to the EPA's ability to achieve its mission, as well as to the EPA's internal operations related to COVID-19 emergency relief and response efforts.

Thirty-six other inspectors general also have reported on [the top pandemic-related challenges in their agencies](#), as released by CIGIE's [PRAC](#).

Actual and Potential Subjects of Audits and Evaluations



- Enforcement and regulatory waivers and flexibilities.
- Fraud schemes taking advantage of crisis by marketing unsafe and non-EPA-approved products to the public.
- Agency staffing shortfalls implicating oversight of critical environmental and public health programs.
- Agency return to work and employee health and safety upon reentry.
- Maintaining strong cyber and information technology protections while most of the workforce is teleworking.

Pandemic-Related Reports and Recently Announced Projects



Listed in chronological order, starting with the most recent:

[Report: EPA's FYs 2020–2021 Top Management Challenges](#)

July 21, 2020. Identifying and resolving top management challenges is essential to the EPA's protection of human health and the environment. The OIG identified maintaining human health and environmental protections, business operations, and employee safety during the coronavirus pandemic, among others, as a top management challenge. Report #20-N-0231

[Report: Fiscal Year 2020 U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board Management Challenges](#)

July 6, 2020. Unaddressed management challenges will impede the ability of the CSB to function effectively. The OIG has identified the continuation of operations during the coronavirus pandemic as a top management challenge, among others, for the CSB. Report #20-N-0218

[Notification: EPA's Strategies to Comply with Federal Guidelines for Reopening Facilities Closed Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

July 1, 2020. The OIG is conducting an evaluation of the EPA's response to the White House's *Guidelines for Opening Up America Again*. This evaluation is part of the OIG's efforts to examine the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0241

Report: EPA's Initial Implementation of CARES Act Section 3610

June 29, 2020. The Office of Acquisition Solutions created and provided detailed guidance to EPA contracting personnel and contractors related to reimbursements under Section 3610 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, known as the CARES Act.

Report #20-N-0202

Top Pandemic-Related Challenges Facing the EPA

June 17, 2020. The OIG has identified initial challenges to the EPA's ability to achieve its mission, as well as to its internal operations.

Notification: Survey of EPA On-Scene Coordinators and Managers Regarding COVID-19

June 15, 2020. The OIG is conducting an evaluation to examine the EPA's protection of human health, the environment, and its on-scene coordinators for emergency responses during the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0240

Notification: Internal Controls Established to Implement Programs and Activities Funded under the CARES Act

June 10, 2020. The OIG is conducting an evaluation concerning internal controls established for programs and activities funded under the CARES Act. Project #OA&E-FY20-0234

Notification: EPA's Oversight of Tribal Drinking Water Systems

May 29, 2020. The OIG is conducting an evaluation of the EPA's oversight of tribal drinking water systems, including how that oversight has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Project #OA&E-FY20-0044

Notification: Evaluation of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's compliance with the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014

May 14, 2020. The OIG is assessing the CSB's compliance with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2020 Inspector General Federal Information Security Modernization Act Reporting Metrics. This evaluation may address any concerns about security of the Agency's network during the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0034

Notification: Research for Future Audits and Evaluations Regarding Effects of Coronavirus Pandemic (SARS-CoV-2 Virus and COVID-19 Disease) on EPA Programs and Operations

May 7, 2020. The OIG has initiated an overall project to research and identify topics for potential audits and evaluations related to the EPA's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0212

Notification: Evaluation of EPA's Information Systems' Compliance with Federal System Security Plans Requirements (2nd notification)

May 6, 2020. One objective of this audit is to evaluate elements within the EPA's System Security Plans to determine whether they provide sufficient details to allow the EPA to make decisions regarding network security during the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0176

Notification: FY 2020 EPA's Compliance with the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014

May 5, 2020. The OIG is assessing the EPA's compliance with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2020 Inspector General Federal Information Security Modernization Act Reporting Metrics and the relevant impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Project #OA&E-FY20-0033

Potential Investigation Targets



We take seriously our obligation to investigate fraud related to the coronavirus pandemic. We are particularly committed to investigating fraud schemes involving potential criminal activity or misconduct that impact the American people or thwart the EPA's ability to fulfill its mission, as well as to investigating conduct that relies on, takes advantage of, or exploits a weakness or vulnerability in an EPA program or operation.

Different Types of Investigations OIG May Undertake

- Fraud schemes relating to the EPA's programs and operations.
- Fraudulent claims for money that should be spent to advance an EPA program.
- Improper avoidance of obligations to pay as required by an EPA program.
- Misrepresentations of the EPA's endorsement of COVID disinfectant or other products by fraudulently applying the Agency seal, identifier, or product registration numbers to product labels or advertisements.
- Cyberscams targeting EPA employees, contractors, and grantees as well as security threats to the EPA.

Learn more about our [investigative COVID-19 response](#) or [contact the OIG Hotline](#).

Prior OIG Reports Relevant to EPA's Handling of Emergencies and Disasters

[Report: Management Alert - To Minimize Risk of Environmental Harm, the Security Categorization of Electronic Manifest System Data Needs to Be Re-Evaluated](#)

[Report: EPA Needs to Improve Its Risk Management and Incident Response Information Security Functions](#)

[Report: CSB's Information Security Program Is Defined, but Improvements Needed in Risk Management, Identity and Access Management, and Incident Response](#)

[View More Prior OIG Reports Relevant to the EPA's Handling of Emergencies And Disasters →](#)

Related Resources

- [Coronavirus.gov](#)
- [EPA's resources related to COVID-19](#)
- [CIGIE's Pandemic Response Accountability Committee](#)
- **Report COVID-19 related waste, fraud, and abuse concerns to the [OIG Hotline](#)**