MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: New Process for Development of Integrated Risk Information System Health Assessments

TO: Assistant Administrators
General Counsel
Inspector General
Chief Financial Officer
Chief of Staff
Associate Administrators
Regional Administrators

I have long recognized the critical role that EPA plays in disseminating timely, high-quality, and accessible human health risk information on environmental contaminants that may endanger the health of the American public. Central to this aspect of EPA's mission is its highly regarded Integrated Risk Information System program that provides health effects information on chemicals to which the public is exposed from releases to air, water, and land at contaminated sites and through use and disposal of products. IRIS assessments provide a scientific foundation for actions to protect public health across EPA's programs and regions under a broad array of environmental laws. IRIS is also a critical resource for risk assessors and environmental and health professionals in state and local governments and other countries.

It is of utmost importance that the process used to develop the IRIS risk information, and the resulting assessments posted on IRIS, reflect the highest possible standards for scientific quality and integrity and provide a timely basis for government actions to protect public health. Unfortunately, recent changes to the IRIS process, including the procedures formalized in an April 10, 2008, memorandum from the former Deputy Administrator, have reduced the transparency, timeliness, and scientific integrity of the IRIS process. The President's strong emphasis on the importance of transparency and scientific integrity in government decision-making compelled a rethinking of the IRIS process.

Therefore, after consulting with EPA scientists, I have asked the Office of Research and Development to immediately implement a new IRIS process that will be more responsive to the needs of the Agency and its government partners in protecting the health of Americans. This new IRIS assessment development process is reflected in the enclosed chart and background paper. It will be more transparent and timely, and it will ensure the highest level of scientific

integrity. The process will be entirely managed by EPA, which will have final responsibility for the content of all IRIS assessments after considering the scientific input of experts at other agencies and White House offices. To guarantee the scientific quality of the IRIS assessments, the process will include the opportunity for public comment and rely on a rigorous, open, and independent external peer review. Changes in EPA's scientific judgments during this public process will be clearly documented and explained, maximizing the transparency of the final product. While still robust, the assessment development process will be shortened to 23 months, speeding the availability of IRIS assessments to the risk assessor community and the public and providing for more timely action to protect public health. In addition, to give this new process an added boost, I have directed that for fiscal year 2010, resources for the IRIS program will be increased. I am pleased to announce that the President's budget request includes an additional $5 million and 10 FTEs for the IRIS program.

EPA remains dedicated to listening and being responsive to the public, independent experts, and scientists in other federal agencies as it develops IRIS human health assessments. I believe the new process will achieve this goal while providing timely and high-quality human health risk information to EPA's programs and regions that ensures that the Agency's actions protect the public health.

Lisa P. Jackson

Attachment