



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this review to determine how U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversight of state pesticide inspections ensures the quality of state-performed Worker Protection Standard and certification inspections. We evaluated how the EPA selects inspection reports for oversight, documents its reviews, and conducts follow-up on oversight findings.

Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), Worker Protection Standard inspections aim to protect agricultural workers from the effects of exposure to pesticides. FIFRA certification inspections ensure that all applicators of pesticides are certified and are applying pesticides in certified areas.

This report addresses the following EPA goal or cross-agency strategy:

- *Ensuring the safety of chemicals and preventing pollution.*

Send all inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566 2391 or visit www.epa.gov/oig.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2015/20150515-15-P-0156.pdf

EPA's Oversight of State Pesticide Inspections Needs Improvement to Better Ensure Safeguards for Workers, Public and Environment Are Enforced

What We Found

The EPA regions we reviewed did not consistently document or retain evidence of the quality of state-performed FIFRA Worker Protection Standard and certification inspections. It was difficult to analyze EPA project officer oversight reviews for adequacy because of an overall lack of records and transparency on how issues associated with state inspections are addressed. Specifically:

- EPA reviewers did not consistently document, report or retain records of issues found during reviews.
- EPA files did not provide specific documentation on how state enforcement actions were consistent with state enforcement policies and procedures.
- EPA often relied on the state agency to select inspection reports for review, which may introduce bias.
- Most EPA regions did not provide or document formal feedback on issues found during reviews so that states could improve their inspections.

EPA oversight weaknesses occurred because of inadequate guidance and training. Improvements are needed to increase assurance that standards for workers who handle pesticides, as well as standards concerning pesticide application and use, are being met and risks to human health and the environment are being managed.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the EPA revise the FIFRA Project Officer Manual to include specific requirements for selecting inspections; reporting, documenting and retaining inspection review records; documenting states' consistency with enforcement policies; and communicating results of regional inspection reviews. We also recommend that the agency require periodic project officer training and ensure the above requirements are included in the training.

The agency agreed with our recommendations. This report contains one resolved recommendation with corrective actions pending and one unresolved recommendation needing further planned corrective actions and an estimated completion date.

Improvements in the EPA's inspection report review process will increase assurance that state inspections are preventing unreasonable risk to human health and the environment from pesticides.