



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We sought to determine whether data within the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Information System (RCRAInfo) complied with prescribed system edit and validation checks designed to control data entry. The Office of Inspector General contracted with Williams, Adley & Company, LLP, to conduct this review.

Background

RCRAInfo collects data from states and private companies to track the generation, shipment, and receipt of hazardous solid waste. This data is reported to the public in the Biennial Hazardous Waste Report and through the Envirofacts website. The EPA Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, Information Collection and Analysis is responsible for development and ongoing support of RCRAInfo.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2011/20110207-11-P-0096.pdf

EPA Could Improve RCRAInfo Data Quality and System Development

What Williams, Adley & Company, LLP, Found

RCRAInfo data that tracks hazardous waste handlers and the shipment and receipt of hazardous waste contains errors and is missing source documentation. These conditions call into question the quality and reliability of data within the RCRAInfo system, as well as any resulting reporting. Further, RCRAInfo system owners did not follow the prescribed System Life Cycle Management testing procedures to test and validate the updated software and updated system. For example, the edit and validation checks did not work as intended, the data dictionary was not maintained, and system coding errors existed in the system.

Further, field work found instances of test data comingled with production data. Overall, the above conditions were caused by not having specific data quality procedures for RCRAInfo that align with the Agency's data quality policy, not following the System Life Cycle Management procedures for system development, and not adequately communicating with the states regarding the RCRAInfo test environment. EPA is responsible for maintaining the technology platform in a manner that supports data quality and integrity, as well as for oversight of the data quality program. As required by the EPA quality policy, EPA organizations must document and implement a quality program for environmental data that is intended for external distribution.

What Williams, Adley & Company, LLP, Recommends

Williams, Adley & Company, LLP, recommends the Director, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, implement a procedure for regional personnel to notify a state when changes are made to handler records. The company also recommends that guidance and policy be provided on retaining source documentation, and that control procedures be implemented on updating documentation and on reviewing the production database for test data on a semiannual basis.

We met with Agency officials to discuss our findings and recommendations. The Agency provided responses, and we included those comments in the briefing report.