



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The objective of this evaluation was to determine how well the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can accomplish its mission essential functions in the event of a pandemic influenza or equivalent national emergency that necessitates Continuity of Operations (COOP) activation.

Background

Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FCD 1) requires EPA to develop a continuity plan that ensures its ability to accomplish its mission essential functions from an alternative site with limited staffing and without access to resources available during normal activities. EPA must be prepared to continue to function during an emergency and to effectively resume essential operations when they are interrupted.

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2010/20091027-10-P-0017.pdf

EPA Needs to Improve Continuity of Operations Planning

What We Found

EPA has limited assurance that it can successfully maintain continuity of operations and execute its mission essential functions during a significant national event such as a pandemic influenza outbreak. EPA's COOP policy does not clearly define authorities and responsibilities for continuity planning at all levels of the Agency and has not been updated to reflect current national directives and guidance. EPA lacks internal management controls, including guidance and systematic oversight, to ensure that regional offices have developed continuity plans that meet the requirements of FCD 1. Regional plans generally lack consistency, particularly in the area of mission essential functions, and there was no evidence that EPA Headquarters had reviewed, approved, or commented on the regional plans, their designation, or lack of essential functions.

EPA's continuity training and exercises have not prepared the Agency to provide essential services during a significant national event. EPA has not held and does not require any all-employee continuity training. Also, EPA's continuity exercises do not test EPA's ability to execute its mission essential functions following COOP activation. Four out of six regions contacted and all but one program office have not conducted internal exercises to test capabilities during a pandemic.

What We Recommend

EPA should establish a schedule to complete FCD 1 requirements, designate a lead office for COOP planning, and identify Headquarters and regional responsibilities and authorities. EPA should also develop consistent mission essential functions and COOP plan preparation and training guidance for all regions. Further, EPA Headquarters should review and approve all regional and program office COOP plans. The Agency concurred with our recommendations.