

News Release



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C.

For Immediate Release

May 16, 2019

Contact: Tia Elbaum

Jennifer Kaplan

Phone: (202) 566-2548

(202) 566-0918

Email: Elbaum.Kentia@epa.gov

Kaplan.Jennifer@epa.gov

EPA OIG issues report on former EPA Administrator's travel

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Inspector General (OIG) today issued a report examining the EPA's compliance with federal requirements and agency policy and procedures for former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's travel. The OIG ascertained, among other findings, that Pruitt and his staff incurred an estimated nearly \$124,000 in excessive airfare expenses without sufficient justification to support security concerns requiring the use of first- and business-class travel.

After receiving numerous congressional requests and hotline complaints regarding Pruitt's travel, the OIG initiated an audit to determine the frequency, cost and extent of the Administrator's travel; whether federal regulations and EPA travel policy and procedures were followed; and whether EPA policy and procedures were sufficiently designed to prevent fraud, waste and abuse.

The audit analyzed 40 trips (including six that were cancelled) and about \$985,000 in total associated costs for the period from March 1 to December 31, 2017. The OIG also found that:

- The EPA's travel policies lacked a clear delegation of authority for approving the Administrator's travel; however, this issue since has been resolved.
- The EPA and its employees did not always justify the use of non-contract air carriers.
- Compliance with federal regulations in the selection of first/business class carrier and flights was not documented.
- The EPA approved lodging costs above per diem without adequate justification.
- The EPA did not maintain sufficient details to verify that no additional costs resulted from trips with stops in Pruitt's hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- The EPA improperly approved business-class travel for Protective Service Detail agents and other staff accompanying the Administrator on international travel.
- International trip reports were inaccurate and incomplete.
- Pruitt's use of military and chartered flights was justified and approved in accordance with regulations.

“The EPA’s management of its travel program has been a persistent area of concern for the Office of Inspector General,” said Deputy Inspector General Charles Sheehan. “In this most recent report, the OIG found, among other lapses, that funds were spent without sufficient justification on first- and business-class travel for former Administrator Pruitt and his staff. If the agency’s internal controls over travel aren’t strengthened, abuses may continue to occur at great cost to EPA programs and taxpayers.”

Prior to this audit, the OIG had identified weaknesses in the EPA’s internal controls regarding travel in audit reports issued in [May 2011](#), [December 2013](#) and [September 2015](#).

As a result of the audit just concluded, the OIG recommended that the EPA determine whether the excessive airfare costs identified and any additional costs through Pruitt’s resignation in July 2018 should be recovered. The OIG made a total of 14 recommendations, of which 10 are unresolved. Overall, actions need to be taken to strengthen controls over agency travel to help prevent the potential for future fraud, waste and abuse.

A podcast is available with the OIG’s report. Both are available at <https://go.usa.gov/xmpKg>.

The OIG is an independent office within the EPA that performs audits and investigations of the EPA and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, and prevents and detects fraud, waste and abuse. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/oig>, follow the OIG on Twitter at @EPAoig (<https://twitter.com/EPAoig>) and view video coverage of topics impacting the American taxpayers at <youtube.com/epaoig>.

###