

Report: EPA Needs to Manage Nanomaterial Risks More Effectively

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On December 29, 2011, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a [report](#) detailing the results of its investigation into how effectively EPA is managing the human health and environmental risks of nanomaterials. After examining EPA's statutory authority and ongoing regulatory efforts, the report concluded that "EPA does not currently have sufficient information or processes to effectively manage the human health and environmental risks of nanomaterials." Given its findings in the report, OIG recommends that EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) "develop a process to assure the effective dissemination and coordination of nanomaterial information across relevant program offices." EPA has adopted a corrective action plan in response to the report, under which EPA will convene a workgroup to begin developing such a process by January 31, 2012, and complete a draft document outlining this process by July 31, 2012.

OIG's report indicated that EPA has primarily regulated nanomaterials under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The report found that EPA's voluntary information collection programs have been ineffective due to a lack of industry participation, and that EPA's rulemaking efforts have been slow, with two proposed rulemakings stalled in the Office of Management and Budget. OIG further noted that EPA's ability to regulate is inherently limited by the shortcomings of FIFRA and TSCA, including heavy reliance on industry-disclosed information and excessive claims of confidential business information. The report also criticized EPA's lack of internal coordination between its several offices to share data and other nanomaterials information. Further, OIG found that EPA had not adequately communicated information about nanomaterials to the general public, noting in particular that EPA does not have a single comprehensive nanomaterials webpage. The report also found that the lack of technology to detect nanomaterials in the environment and remediate nanomaterial contamination limits EPA's ability to effectively manage nanomaterial risks.

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