



FACT SHEET: RELEASE OF EPA'S "FRAMEWORK FOR CUMULATIVE RISK ASSESSMENT"; MAY 2003

ACTION: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed a final document entitled, "Framework for Cumulative Risk Assessment," and is making it available to the public. A *Federal Register* notice, published May 27, 2003, announced the availability of the final document.

SUMMARY: In response to the increasing focus on cumulative risk - *the combined risks from aggregate exposures to multiple agents or stressors* - EPA has begun to explore cumulative approaches to risk assessment. *Cumulative risk assessment is an analysis, characterization, and possible quantification of the combined risks to human health or the environment from multiple agents or stressors.* EPA will use this *Framework* as a basis for future guidance as EPA continues with assessment activities related to cumulative risk.

The *Framework for Cumulative Risk Assessment* is the first step in a long-term effort to develop cumulative risk assessment guidance. Building on EPA's growing experience with cumulative risk assessment, the *Framework* is intended to foster consistent approaches to cumulative risk assessment in EPA, identify key issues, and define terms used in these assessments. The *Framework* identifies the basic elements of the cumulative risk assessment process and provides a flexible structure for conducting and evaluating cumulative risk assessment, and for addressing scientific issues related to cumulative risk. Although this *Framework* report will serve as a foundation for developing future guidance, it is neither a procedural guide nor a regulatory requirement within EPA, and it is expected to evolve with experience. The *Framework* is not an attempt to lay out protocols to address all the risks or considerations that are needed to adequately inform community decisions. Rather, it is an information document, focused on describing various aspects of cumulative risk.

BACKGROUND: Several reports, including the National Research Council's (NRC) 1994 report "Science and Judgment in Risk Assessment," have highlighted the importance of understanding the accumulation of risks from multiple environmental stressors. These reports, as well as legislation such as the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (FQPA), urged EPA to move beyond single chemical assessments and to focus, in part, on the cumulative effects of chemical exposures occurring simultaneously. In 1999, EPA's Risk Assessment Forum began development of EPA-wide cumulative risk assessment guidance.

As a first step, a technical panel convened under the Risk Assessment Forum has been working to develop a framework for cumulative risk assessment. This document is the result of that technical panel's efforts. Earlier drafts of the document served as a background piece for peer consultations with state, and Federal, and other peer groups. An external peer review, open to the public, was held in June 2002. The document was revised based on input received during the peer review process, and from public review and comment.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The primary method for obtaining the *Framework for Cumulative Risk Assessment* is by downloading the document from the Internet at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/raf/recordisplay.cfm?deid=54944> . In the near future, EPA expects to make this report available in a printed version as well. For information on the timetable for availability of the printed report, please contact: Marilyn Brower, Risk Assessment Forum Staff, National Center for Environmental Assessment (8601D), Office of Research and Development; Telephone: 202-564-3363; Facsimile: 202-565-0062; Email: risk.forum@epa.gov

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