



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this review of the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) to determine how effective NPIC is at reporting pesticide enforcement and compliance incidents to the appropriate State Lead Agencies (SLAs). NPIC is funded by a cooperative agreement currently between Oregon State University and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We initiated this review based on issues raised by SLAs at a 2013 public meeting on various pesticide issues.

According to the EPA, NPIC provides objective, science-based information about pesticides to enable people to make informed decisions about pesticides and their use.

This report addresses the following EPA goal or cross-agency strategy:

- *Ensuring the safety of chemicals and preventing pollution.*

Send all inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or visit www.epa.gov/oig.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2015/20150107-15-P-0046.pdf.

EPA Needs to Improve Outreach and Communication About the National Pesticide Information Center's Role and Services

What We Found

NPIC's role is not well understood by some SLAs, which has led to confusion and dissatisfaction with NPIC services. NPIC is designed to respond to public inquiries about pesticides through a toll-free telephone service, an extensive website and through outreach and training; to provide objective, science-based information about pesticides and pesticide-related topics to enable the public to make informed decisions about pesticides and their use. NPIC's responsibilities do not include reporting to SLAs specific pesticide enforcement and compliance incidents that may violate pesticide laws. We believe this confusion stems from a lack of outreach and communication to SLAs regarding NPIC's role. The cooperative agreement with the EPA does not require NPIC to engage in proactive outreach or communication regarding its role and services with SLAs.

Improved communication to state agencies regarding NPIC's role and services will improve NPIC's value and ability to provide reliable information to the public and states.

Additionally, some SLAs expressed concern that NPIC staff are not contacting SLAs to make sure that state contact information on the NPIC website is up-to-date and accurate. Improved NPIC communication of its role and services and more contact with SLAs will improve understanding of NPIC's value and enhance its ability to provide reliable information.

Recommendations

We recommend that the EPA send notices annually to inform all SLAs of NPIC's role and services and clearly state that NPIC is not a pesticide compliance or enforcement program. We also recommend that the agency amend its cooperative agreement to require the grantee to consult annually with each SLA to verify contact information on the NPIC website, as well as to communicate NPIC roles and services to SLAs. The EPA agreed with our recommendations and has proposed acceptable corrective actions. All recommendations are resolved.