At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We initiated this audit based on a Hotline complaint related to the Emergency Management Portal (EMP) equipment tracking module. Our objectives were to determine the extent to which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) implemented the EMP equipment tracking software, what efforts EPA has made to assess functionality and cost effectiveness, and how the EMP equipment module compared to the previous interim system.

Background

Since September 11, 2001, EPA's emergency response focus has expanded to better coincide with its new role in homeland security. In May 2002, EPA determined that it needed to create a national equipment tracking system to be better prepared for terrorist acts and nationally significant incidents.

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

The full report is at: www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2011/20110913-11-P-0616.pdf

EPA Has Not Fully Implemented a National Emergency Response Equipment Tracking System

What We Found

Although EPA spent $2.8 million as of October 2010 to develop and implement an EMP emergency equipment tracking module, EPA has not fully implemented the module, and the module suffers from operational issues. Our review of allegations in a Hotline complaint found that:

- EPA does not fully use the EMP equipment tracking module because no EPA office with overall authority has mandated its use.
- EPA has made no formal effort to assess functionality and cost effectiveness due to its decision to perform such assessments only after fully implementing the EMP equipment module.
- The EMP equipment module is cumbersome and slow, and may not be the most efficient and effective emergency equipment tracking alternative.

EPA has guidance and policies that require the Agency to develop and implement a plan for a national equipment tracking system. Both the Office of Management and Budget and EPA require performance measurement of such systems. However, EPA has not fulfilled this requirement. In addition to the $2.8 million it has already spent, EPA plans to spend another $5.5 million over the next 15 years on the EMP equipment module's maintenance. Further, the regions that are using the module continue to maintain their own tracking systems, resulting in wasted resources. Because EPA has not fully implemented the EMP equipment module and the module is cumbersome and slow, EPA's ability to protect public health and the environment in the event of a nationally significant incident may be impaired.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response ensure that only essential equipment tracking data are required to be recorded and determine whether the EMP equipment module is the most cost-efficient alternative. We also recommend that the EPA Deputy Administrator mandate that regions and emergency response teams employ the national tracking system that EPA decides to use for emergency response equipment. The Agency concurred with the findings and recommendations, but did not provide a corrective action date for the first recommendation. The Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response will hire an outside contractor to conduct an alternative analysis to determine the most efficient and effective national emergency response equipment tracking alternative. The Deputy Administrator also plans to issue a memo requiring the use of the EMP equipment module for tracking equipment.