



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) sought to determine whether EPA is following quality control procedures to ensure that data submitted from Radiation Network (RadNet) monitors nationwide are reliable and accurate, and whether EPA effectively implemented corrective actions in response to the EPA OIG's January 27, 2009, audit report on RadNet.

Background

EPA's December 2004 Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Protection Plan identified RadNet monitors as critical infrastructure. The mission of RadNet is to monitor environmental radioactivity in the United States to provide high-quality data for assessing public exposure and environmental impacts resulting from nuclear emergencies, and to provide baseline data during routine conditions. RadNet played a critical role in monitoring radiation levels in the United States during the March 2011 Japan nuclear incident.

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

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2012/20120419-12-P-0417.pdf

Weaknesses in EPA's Management of the Radiation Network System Demand Attention

What We Found

Broken RadNet monitors and late filter changes impaired this critical infrastructure asset. On March 11, 2011, at the time of the Japan nuclear incident, 25 of the 124 installed RadNet monitors, or 20 percent, were out of service for an average of 130 days. The service contractor completed repairs for all monitors by April 8, 2011. In addition, 6 of the 12 RadNet monitors we sampled had gone over 8 weeks without a filter change, and 2 of those for over 300 days. Because EPA managed RadNet with lower than required priority, parts shortages and insufficient contract oversight contributed to extensive delays in fixing broken monitors. In addition, broken RadNet monitors and relaxed quality controls contributed to the filters not being changed timely. Out-of-service monitors and unchanged filters may reduce the quality and availability of critical data needed to assess radioactive threats to public health and the environment.

EPA remains behind schedule for installing the RadNet monitors and did not fully resolve contracting issues identified in the OIG's January 2009 report. Until EPA improves contractor oversight, the Agency's ability to use RadNet data to protect human health and the environment, and meet requirements established in the National Response Framework for Nuclear Radiological Incidents, is potentially impaired.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation establish and enforce expectations for RadNet operations readiness. We recommend improved planning and management of parts availability, monitoring of filter replacement and operators, and monitoring of the installation of the remaining RadNet monitors. Further, we recommend that the Assistant Administrator, in conjunction with the Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management, hold contractors accountable by establishing milestones, using incentives and disincentives, requiring contracting officers and contracting officers' representatives to formally evaluate RadNet contractors annually, and ensure that the Agency's Management Audit Tracking System is accurate and current. The Agency concurred with the recommendations except for developing metrics for evaluating frequency of filter changes and completing contractor performance evaluations, which is considered unresolved. The Agency also proposed revised language, which we incorporated where appropriate.