



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We evaluated the effectiveness of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) processes used to track the receipt, disposition and resolution of public pesticide petitions. Specifically, we evaluated whether the EPA has processes to ensure transparency and consistency when responding to public pesticide petitions.

The EPA regulates pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Public petitions can be submitted to the Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) for rulemaking; to modify or revoke pesticide tolerances; to cancel a pesticide's registration(s); or to request a specific action on a policy, guidance or agency process.

This report addresses the following EPA goals or cross-agency strategies:

- *Ensuring the safety of chemicals and preventing pollution.*
- *Embracing EPA as a high-performing organization.*

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The full report is available at: www.epa.gov/office-inspector-general/oig-reports.

EPA Needs Policies and Procedures to Manage Public Pesticide Petitions in a Transparent and Efficient Manner

What We Found

OPP does not have policies or procedures to ensure transparency when managing public pesticide petitions. Due to the lack of transparency and direct communication, some petitioners sued the EPA for "unreasonable delay," resulting in unnecessary costs to the agency and public. OPP did not effectively communicate with petitioners in the following manner:

OPP's lack of policies and procedures to manage public pesticide petitions in a transparent and efficient manner leaves petitioners unaware of petition status, which can result in unreasonable delay lawsuits costing the agency time and resources.

- Acknowledge petition receipt.
- Provide updates about the agency's work to resolve petitions.
- Provide petition decisions.

In addition, OPP lacks policies and procedures to manage petitions in a generally efficient or effective manner. Specifically:

- Petition documentation was not readily accessible, which was inconsistent with each of the EPA's Records Management Policies in place during the timeframe of our review.
- Some petition data were inaccurate, which resulted in the duplication of work to confirm data.
- According to OPP, petitions may take weeks to arrive at the correct office for action, because there is no guidance on how to submit petitions directly to OPP.
- OPP does not provide guidance to the public on how to submit complete petitions, which resulted in some petitioners providing supplemental information, and increased the time and resources to reach petition decisions.

By contrast, the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission are considered to have best practices with policies and procedures for acknowledging petition receipt, directly communicating the petition decision to the petitioner, and tracking petitions.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention develop policies and procedures to manage public petitions in a transparent, effective, and efficient manner; communicate directly with petitioners; train staff to adhere to the Records Management Policy; implement an effective tracking system for public petitions; and provide guidance to the public on how to submit petitions with sufficient data for review. The EPA agreed with our recommendations and has proposed acceptable corrective actions. All recommendations are resolved. No further response from the agency is needed.