

Pandemic Report (As of July 2021): U.S. EPA Office of Inspector General Report



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09/01/2021

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) issued a report titled:

Pandemic Report – As of July 2021 (“Report”)

OIG states that the *Report* is intended to document its work related to the COVID-19 pandemic which involves:

- Audits
- Evaluations
- Investigations

The focus of such work is related to the pandemic’s impact on EPA’s activities and the resulting effect on public health and the environment .

The United States Chemical Safety and Hazardous Investigation Board’s activities are also addressed.

EPA programs assessed in terms of pandemic effects are noted to include, by way of example:

- Emergency responses to release of hazardous substances
- Air quality enforcement
- Potential misconduct and criminal activity

OIG notes that both actual and potential subjects of audits and evaluations include:

- Enforcement and regulatory waivers and flexibilities.
- Fraud schemes taking advantage of the crisis by marketing unsafe and non-EPA-approved products to the public.
- Agency staffing shortfalls implicating oversight of critical environmental and public health programs.
- Agency return to work and employee health and safety upon reentry.
- Maintaining strong cyber and information technology protections while most of the workforce is teleworking.
- Ability of delegated state and tribal environmental programs to meet critical environmental and public health responsibilities.
- How EPA is administering its CARES Act funding.

The *Report* identifies the following as types of investigations OIG is undertaking or may undertake:

- Fraud schemes relating to the EPA’s programs and operations.
- Fraudulent claims for money that should be spent to advance an EPA program.
- Improper avoidance of obligations to pay as required by an EPA program.

- Misrepresentations of the EPA's endorsement of COVID disinfectant or other products by fraudulently applying the Agency seal, identifier, or product registration numbers to product labels or advertisements.
- Cyberscams targeting EPA employees, contractors, and grantees and state and tribal programs overseen by EPA, as well as security threats to the EPA.

The *Report* also provides a list of previous OIG reports related to the pandemic and COVID-related complaints. Further, it identifies prior OIG reports relevant to EPA's handling of emergencies and disasters.

A copy of the *Report* can be downloaded [here](#).