



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General initiated this audit to determine whether the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board has an effective system for managing its investigative process. CSB is an independent federal agency, authorized by the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 to investigate, determine and report to the public in writing the facts, conditions and circumstances and the cause or probable cause of any accidental release resulting in a fatality, serious injury or substantial property damages.

This report addresses the following CSB goal:

- *Conduct incident investigations and safety studies concerning releases of hazardous chemical substances.*

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/2013/20130730-13-P-0337.pdf

U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board Needs to Complete More Timely Investigations

What We Found

CSB does not have an effective management system to meet its established performance goal to “[c]onduct incident investigations and safety studies concerning releases of hazardous chemical substances.” CSB has not fully accomplished its related strategic objective to “[c]omplete timely, high quality investigations that examine the technical, management systems, organizational, and regulatory causes of chemical incidents.” We identified five reasons why CSB did not meet its objective to timely complete investigations:

- A lack of defined performance indicators in CSB’s annual performance plan, which are necessary to assess the efficiency of its investigations process.
- A backlog of open investigations without documented plans for resolution.
- An average investigative staff turnover rate of 15 percent.
- Non-collocation of files and incorrectly classified or coded investigation files.
- A need for updated policies over current investigative procedures and a policy that defines final investigative products.

By completing investigations more timely, CSB can better fulfill its mission and improve its ability to ensure that it provides the community and other stakeholders with findings and recommendations to help reduce the occurrence of similar incidents, which would protect human health and the environment.

Recommendations and CSB Planned Corrective Actions

We made nine recommendations, including that the CSB chairperson:

- Develop and implement performance indicators.
- Revise and publish annual and individual action plans.
- Review investigations open for over 3 years and develop a close-out plan.
- Review investigation files for each ongoing investigation to ensure it contains all the supporting documents related to the investigation.
- Implement and update the management policy for investigative records.

CSB agreed with six of nine recommendations and responded in detail to each in appendix A. CSB plans to complete proposed corrective actions by December 31, 2013. CSB disagreed with the remaining three recommendations and resolution efforts are in progress.

Noteworthy Achievements

CSB has made progress in providing investigators with training and identifying operational tools for the investigative process. CSB also instituted the use of scoping documents and recommendation briefings to help improve the process.