



# At a Glance

## Why We Did This Review

We evaluated the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) classified national security information practices as required by Section 6(b)(1) of the Reducing Over-Classification Act. In this report, we reviewed a sample of documents classified by the EPA to determine the appropriateness of the classification decisions and markings.

Information may be classified so that it is protected against unauthorized disclosure in the interest of national security. Such information must be appropriately marked to indicate its classified status. Original classification means the initial determination to classify is made by an original classification authority, and for the EPA the Administrator serves as the sole original classification authority. Others can classify information derivatively on the basis of classified source documents or classification guides.

**This report addresses the following EPA theme:**

- *Embracing EPA as a high performing organization.*

**For further information, contact our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391.**

**The full report is at:**  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2014/20131115-14-P-0017.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2014/20131115-14-P-0017.pdf)

## ***EPA Does Not Adequately Follow National Security Information Classification Standards***

### What We Found

Our review of both originally and derivatively classified documents generated by three offices found that the EPA does not sufficiently follow national security information classification standards.

**EPA's national security information could be improperly classified without improved procedures.**

Of the two originally classified documents we reviewed, portions of one needed different classification levels and the other contained numerical data that was incorrectly transferred from another document. The National Homeland Security Research Center in the Office of Research and Development agreed to correct the documents. We also noted that the approved classification guide and the three guides under review had narrow scopes, which limits their usefulness. The three proposed guides have been in the approval process for 12 months when it must take no more than 30 days. Additionally, the declassification process needs clarity since the one pending declassification request has also been in the approval process for almost a year when it should take no more than 60 days.

None of the 19 derivatively classified documents we reviewed completely met the requirements of Executive Order 13526 and the implementing regulations. The derivative classifiers did not include some required information and did not correctly transfer information from the source documents. As a result, those who later access the information may not know how to protect it or be able to properly identify or use it as a source for their own derivative decision. A lack of training for derivative classifiers and incorrect information in the annual refresher training given to all clearance holders contributed to the classification problems noted. The EPA had not promptly updated guidance. Not all cleared employees who needed an element relating to designation and management of classified information as part of their performance evaluation had such an element.

### Recommendations and Planned Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Administration and Resources Management assist EPA organizations to correct originally and derivatively classified documents as needed, improve training, and develop a process to address declassification requests. We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development submit a single, unclassified classification guide for approval. The action officials identified corrective actions for all the recommendations, and with one exception, identified milestones to complete the actions. We recommend that the Associate Administrator for the Office of Homeland Security, working with others, develop a process for approving classification guides since its reviews were delaying the process. This recommendation is unresolved because the action official did not concur; resolution will begin immediately upon issuance of the report.