



# At a Glance

*Catalyst for Improving the Environment*

## Why We Did This Review

We performed this review to follow up on the Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) 2005 report titled *EPA Needs to Fulfill Its Designated Responsibilities to Ensure Effective BioWatch Program*. In 2005, the OIG found that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not provide adequate oversight of BioWatch sampling operations and did not ensure quality assurance guidance was followed.

## Background

BioWatch was created by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to detect biological agents in select cities. Introduced in early 2003, BioWatch is part of an evolving, nationwide biosurveillance system that looks for early indicators of the exposure of people, animals, and plants to biological agents. Initially, EPA maintained the sampling portion of the BioWatch program, in part because of the Agency's experience in air monitoring.

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2010/20100420-10-P-0106.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2010/20100420-10-P-0106.pdf)

## EPA's BioWatch Role Reduced

### What We Found

EPA's role has been significantly reduced from that at the time of our 2005 review. DHS has assumed control of the major components of BioWatch for which EPA was initially responsible. These activities include the sampling portion of the program and the issuance of grants to State and local air monitoring agencies to conduct daily monitoring activities. Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local public health labs are now responsible for filter collection and analysis. As of January 2010, EPA was providing technical assistance relating to emergency response and was responsible for updating post detection sampling plans requested by jurisdictions. For the 1-year period January 2009 to January 2010, EPA received \$780,000 from DHS for its BioWatch activities. In Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005, EPA received \$26.8 million from DHS.

When the BioWatch program was first introduced in 2003, the designated responsibilities of EPA's Office of Air and Radiation constituted a crucial part of the BioWatch program – the sampling operations. These operations included monitor deployment, site security, oversight, and assessment of monitor technology. In the OIG's 2005 report, we found that EPA did not provide adequate oversight of the sampling operations to ensure quality assurance guidance was adhered to, potentially affecting the quality of the samples.

Because EPA's role in the BioWatch Program has been reduced, follow-up on implemented corrective actions agreed to for the previous OIG report is no longer required. We concluded that EPA did not need to take further action in response to our 2005 report.

This report makes no recommendations. As a result, no further action is required by EPA. The Agency did not have formal comments on the draft report.