At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for independently reviewing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) programs related to national security. We evaluated the scope and nature of EPA's classified national security information (NSI) infrastructure, and its ability to provide information to those who need it.

Background

Some EPA staff members are cleared to access, use, and create classified NSI in the performance of their assigned duties. EPA must protect NSI according to executive order and other national and EPA guidance. EPA policy requires that a classification guide shall be developed for each system, plan, program, or project in which classified information is involved. The Office of Administration and Resources Management manages EPA's NSI program.

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/2011/20110929-11-P-0722.pdf

EPA Should Prepare and Distribute Security Classification Guides

What We Found

EPA has not established any official classification guides even though EPA Administrators have taken original classification actions. Original classification actions involve someone with original classification authority assigning a classification level to a particular document. According to the NSI program team leader, classification guides have not been prepared because EPA Administrators have only classified a few documents. Executive Order 13526 states that agencies with original classification authority shall prepare classification guides to facilitate the proper and uniform derivative classification of information. Further, EPA's *National Security Information Handbook* requires that a classification guide be developed for each system, plan, program, or project that involves classified information. Without classification guides, EPA staff and other users of EPA's classified information may not be uniformly and consistently identifying information for classification, nor classifying information in a uniform and consistent manner. Ultimately, information that should be identified for safeguarding could be unintentionally released, resulting in harm to national security. Therefore, the lack of classification guides is a material internal control weakness in EPA's classified NSI program.

This report presents a significant finding identified during our ongoing review that requires immediate attention. We will issue a final report that will discuss other results of our review of EPA's classified NSI infrastructure.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Administrator ensure the preparation, review, and approval of appropriate security classification guides that conform to the requirements of Executive Order 13526, *Classified National Security Information*, and EPA's NSI handbook. We also recommend that the Administrator ensure the distribution of classification guides to users of EPA's originally classified information and to program offices that work in related subject areas. The Office of Administration and Resources Management, which responded on behalf of the Agency, did not agree with the report's conclusions, and the recommendations are unresolved.