



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) sought to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) implemented oversight practices for securing access to key EPA locations in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Background

EPA occupies space in six buildings on or near the University of Nevada-Las Vegas campus. These buildings use a card access system to control personnel access to these buildings. The Office of Research and Development (ORD) is responsible for managing the process for authorizing and removing personnel access to these buildings and for administering the computer system that controls the card access system. EPA's Security Management Division within the Office of Administration and Resources Management is the responsible and primary agent within EPA for physical security.

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/2010/20100203-10-P-0059.pdf

EPA Needs to Improve Physical Security at Its Offices in Las Vegas, Nevada

What We Found

EPA needs to improve physical security at its Las Vegas facilities. The Las Vegas Finance Center's (LVFC's) server room and other key areas are susceptible to unauthorized access by personnel not a part of LVFC. The LVFC areas are protected by an access control system, but the system operator – ORD – does not administer the system in a manner that allows LVFC to monitor access to its area. As a result, ORD granted personnel access to sensitive LVFC areas without proper authorization.

During our audit of EPA's financial statements, we found that these problems are not limited to the LVFC. ORD does not administer the system in a manner that permits the other organizations in Las Vegas supported by the system to monitor access to their space. Also, ORD did not perform its responsibilities associated with managing and administering the computer-controlled card access system supporting all of the EPA buildings in Las Vegas.

During subsequent communications with ORD, the office agreed with the findings and indicated that it planned to negotiate the transfer of the responsibility for the maintenance and oversight of the portion of the card access system relied upon by the other offices within Las Vegas to one of the other offices.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the ORD Office of Science Information Management develop and implement procedures to ensure that all organizations are provided with the information necessary to monitor and review the access to their space until one of the offices accepts responsibility for oversight and maintenance of the card access system. Until ORD completes the transfer, we recommend that each Las Vegas office develop and implement a formal procedure that ensures it reviews the access reports provided by ORD for anomalies on at least a monthly basis.

Once one of the offices accepts the responsibility from ORD, we recommend that the office develop and implement a formal procedure for managing the card access system under its control. After the transfer, we recommend that each of the offices establish a formal procedure for reviewing and monitoring the access for the space used by their office. We also recommend that the Security Management Division conduct an assessment of the physical security practices at EPA's Las Vegas locations and conduct outreach to the Las Vegas offices to provide assistance. EPA agreed with the findings and recommendations.