



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We performed this review to determine whether U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) management controls reasonably assure the agency conducts compliance assurance activities for major Clean Air Act (CAA) facilities in accordance with the Compliance Monitoring Strategy (CMS). According to the CMS, delegated agencies should submit a plan that outlines full compliance evaluation (FCE) frequencies. Periodic evaluations are essential to ensure companies' compliance with EPA laws and regulations.

Using the Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) website, which pulls information from EPA compliance databases, we identified a universe of facilities that had not received FCEs in 5 years. We then selected 65 facilities from EPA Regions 6, 8 and 9 to review.

This report addresses the following EPA goals or cross-agency strategies:

- *Addressing climate change and improving air quality.*
- *Protecting human health and the environment by enforcing laws and assuring compliance.*

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Clean Air Act Facility Evaluations Are Conducted, but Inaccurate Data Hinder EPA Oversight and Public Awareness

What We Found

Information obtained through the EPA's ECHO website indicated that many major facilities had not received FCEs in 5 years, although the CMS recommends an FCE every 2 years. However, we found the data were inaccurate and that most facilities in our review had received an FCE or were no longer a major facility.

The errors went undetected because of limited data quality oversight performed in EPA Regions 6, 8 and 9. Oversight was needed to verify data entered into the Air Facility System (AFS) and migrated into the Integrated Compliance Information System-Air (ICIS-Air) database, from which the ECHO website pulls its data. Inaccurate data hinder EPA oversight and reduce assurance that delegated compliance programs comply with the agency's CMS guidance. Further, unreported or inaccurate data presented on the publicly available ECHO website could misinform the public about the status of facilities.

While FCEs were generally conducted in the three regions, Region 9's management controls could be improved. For example, one California local air district could not locate compliance monitoring reports for several facilities, despite having a records-retention policy that requires the district to keep records for 7 years or up to 2018. In addition, 89 percent of the 35 local air districts in California had outdated CMS plans, and four of the five local air districts we reviewed had CMS plans that expired in 2011. Due to these conditions, the EPA has less assurance that local agencies in California are conducting adequate compliance activities, which increases the risk that excess emissions could impact human health and the environment.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

The six recommendations made to the EPA include establishing a process to conduct regular data quality checks, correcting identified inaccuracies in ICIS-Air, adding recordkeeping requirements to the agency's CMS guidance, providing guidance to California's local air districts pertaining to CMS plans, and consulting with states and local agencies regarding sampled facilities that are overdue for an FCE. The EPA agreed with all of the recommendations in our report and provided acceptable corrective actions with projected timeframes for completion. All report recommendations are resolved and open pending completion.

Accurate enforcement databases and updated CMS plans promote effective and efficient EPA oversight of compliance programs, and help to protect the public from harmful air pollutants.