



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR 2 2020

OFFICE OF
LAND AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Response to Office of Inspector General Final Report "EPA Can Improve Incident Readiness with Better Management of Homeland Security and Emergency Response Equipment," No. 20-P-0066, dated January 3, 2020

FROM: Peter C. Wright
Assistant Administrator

TO: Sean O'Donnell, Inspector General
Office of Inspector General

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the issues and recommendations in the subject audit report. The following is a summary of the agency's overall position, along with its position on each of the report recommendations. EPA agrees with all report recommendations and has provided high-level corrective actions and estimated completion dates to the extent possible. For your consideration, we have included a technical comments attachment to supplement this response. This response has been coordinated with the Office of the Administrator, Office of Homeland Security, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, the Office of Air and Radiation, the Office of Mission Support (OMS) and Regions 4, 8, and 10.

AGENCY'S OVERALL POSITION

While we appreciate OIG's effort to incorporate EPA's comments on the draft, we find the report still includes statements regarding EPA's ability to respond to incidents and the adequacy of its equipment. EPA has been, is, and will be ready to respond to all likely incidents anywhere, anytime in the United States or its territories. The ability to respond is not solely dependent on a single list of equipment, which was the subject of this audit. The emergency response program has already benefitted from improvements in equipment tracking as a result of the audit activities. The risk of EPA not being able to fulfill its mission assignments during a nationally significant event or other requests for assistance is extremely low. EPA has identified the equipment it needs and does track that equipment.

A single list of EPA's equipment does not determine EPA's ability to respond, nor does it determine response success. As previously stated, a single list of equipment required to respond to incidents is impossible to develop and maintain. Complex events, such as nationally significant events, have a Unified Command made up of representatives from various federal, state, tribal and local government officials. The federal on-scene coordinator consults with the Unified Command to decide what equipment is necessary for the response beyond the equipment provided by the first responders, and who will provide it. Some equipment used is not EPA personal property. The National Equipment List is maintained by the Emergency Response Technical Group and is based on planning scenarios for

responding to one large and one medium simultaneously occurring events. However, the Regions may have specialized equipment necessary to respond to local environments and the Special Teams may consider substituting, upgrading, or adding equipment based on emerging threats. The equipment list is constantly changing. EPA has a long history of successfully responding to chemical releases and, historically, responds to approximately 160 chemical releases each year.

Throughout the recent, unprecedented disaster response seasons EPA exceeded expectations in dealing with the aftermath of numerous hurricanes and wildfires, oil tank explosions, a typhoon, and an earthquake. EPA made several mobile units available for deployment, including the Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA), the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT), and the Portable High-throughput Integrated Laboratory Information System (PHILIS) in addition to the responsibilities taken on by the on-scene coordinators. The mobile assets have provided, real-time information to decision makers during an incident. For FY17-19 EPA received \$432M from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist state and local organizations performing activities such as removing and properly disposing of contaminated debris and orphan drums and evaluating drinking water supplies.

We also could not find support in the record for the report's conclusions regarding aggregated financial information and number of items. For example, in Table 2, OIG misrepresented the total cost of maintenance contracts as the total cost of alternative systems to track equipment. While an alternative system may be used for tracking contract performance, it is only a portion of the contract value. A single list of equipment will not alleviate the need for maintenance contracts. Further, regarding Recommendation 2, OMS has already established and maintains the Agency-wide system for asset management; the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will ensure the Regions and Special Teams use it for its intended purpose.

All deficiencies regarding equipment tracking noted during the conduct of the audit and mentioned in the report were corrected prior to the issuance of the final report. OEM will work the Special Teams and the Regions to ensure any remaining emergency response property is entered into the Agency Asset Management System per EPA 4832, *EPA Personal Property Manual*, June 2017 and the OEM memo to the Regional Superfund Directors (dated May 22, 2018).

AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Agreements

No.	Recommendation	High-Level Intended Corrective Action(s)	Estimated Completion by Quarter and FY
1	Create and maintain an official agencywide list of needed homeland security and emergency response equipment, so that the agency can maintain readiness for significant incidents in accordance with EPA Order 2071, National Approach to Response.	1.1 EPA will update, finalize, and annually revise the National Equipment List. (OLEM)	2Q FY21, updated annually thereafter

2	Maintain one official agencywide management and tracking system for homeland security and emergency response equipment that provides for the status, availability and acquisition costs of all equipment.	1.1 Establish AAMS as the agency wide system for tracking personal property. (OMS)	December 22, 2015 (completed)
3	Update the Agency Asset Management System with any missing homeland security and emergency response equipment.	3.1 Conduct AAMS training for emergency response and homeland security equipment managers in the Regions and Special Teams. (OLEM)	1 st Quarter FY2020 (completed)
		3.2 Warehouse and/or equipment managers for Special Teams and all Regions will enter emergency response and homeland security equipment into AAMS per EPA 4832, <i>EPA Personal Property Manual</i> , June 2017 and certify annually AAMS is updated.	4th Quarter FY2020, and certify annually by January 30 thereafter
4	Require special teams to implement controls that require property officers over homeland security and emergency response equipment to verify and record the proper status of unused or broken equipment during the agency's annual inventory.	4.1 Warehouse and/or equipment managers for Special Teams and all Regions will enter emergency response and homeland security equipment into AAMS per EPA 4832, <i>EPA Personal Property Manual</i> , June 2017 and certify annually AAMS is updated.	4th Quarter FY2020, and certify annually by January 30 thereafter
5	Require special teams to verify implementation of internal controls for their teams that justify maintaining unused or broken equipment in accordance with requirements in the EPA Personal Property Manual.	5.1 Warehouse and/or equipment managers for Special Teams and all Regions will enter emergency response and homeland security equipment into AAMS per EPA 4832, <i>EPA Personal Property Manual</i> , June 2017 and certify annually AAMS is updated.	4th Quarter FY2020, and certify annually by January 30 thereafter

Disagreements

No.	Recommendation	Agency Explanation/Response	Proposed Alternative
	None		

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Mr. Reggie Cheatham, Director of the Office of Emergency Management, at (202) 564-8003.

Attachment

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EPA Can Improve Incident Readiness with Better Management of Homeland Security and Emergency Response Equipment

Project No. OA&E-FY18-0109

Final Report No. 20-0-0066

Dated January 3, 2020

Page	Section	Comment	Commenter
At A Glance	Instead, the EPA spent an additional \$2,365,938 to track the equipment outside of AAMS, making it difficult for the EPA to have an accurate inventory of HS/ER equipment.	The total cost represented here, and in Chapter 3, Table 2, is for equipment maintenance. Equipment tracking for contract management purposes is a small portion of this cost.	OEM/Regions
OIG Evaluation–			
page 1	Background: EPA Roles and Responsibilities	“The EPA’s Office of Homeland Security (OHS), Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM), Regional Administrators, On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) and special teams can all have a role in responding to an emergency or nationally significant incident.” OHS provides Agency-wide leadership and coordination for homeland security policy but does not have “a role in responding to an emergency or nationally significant event.” OECA and OAR have special teams with a role in emergency response but are not listed here.	OEM
OIG Evaluation			
page 6	Chapter 2	<p>“The EPA has not identified the HS/ER equipment needed to respond to a nationally significant incident.” EPA has identified ER/HS equipment for nationally significant events. Emergency Response Technical Group (ERTG) generates a national equipment list with this focus, in combination with saving money via blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) and establishing parity across regions by encouraging the use of similar equipment. ERTG recommends equipment that is tested and rated by its members to ensure suitability for ER and HS purposes. In the report, amplify ERTG’s work done to identify ER/HS equipment, recommend stocking levels, BPAs for efficient purchasing at bulk rates. The focal point of this report is operating efficiently, and ERTG’s work increases the Agency’s efficiency in this area.</p> <p>EPA successfully responds to emergency responses daily and has determined appropriate equipment to support emergency responses. Regions and Special</p>	OEM

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		Teams determine additional equipment based on regional and specialized need.	
OIG Evaluation–			
page 11	Chapter 3 Existing Tracking Systems Not Used to Track Equipment	"This interaction is not an efficient, systematic way to identify the availability of HS/ER equipment that is used to respond to nationally significant incidents." The use of AAMS and finalizing the NEL does not eliminate the need for consultation during an emergency response or nationally significant event.	OEM
OIG			