



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

As required by Section 6(b)(2)(B) of the *Reducing Over-Classification Act*, we reviewed actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement previous recommendations to improve policies and procedures related to the classification of national security information (NSI).

Executive Order 13526, *Classified National Security Information*, prescribes a uniform system for classifying, safeguarding and declassifying NSI. The unauthorized disclosure of the information could result in damage to the national security. The EPA's Office of Administration and Resources Management manages the agency's NSI program.

This report addresses the following EPA goal or cross-agency strategy:

- *Embracing EPA as a high-performing organization.*

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EPA Improved Its National Security Information Program, but Some Improvements Still Needed

What We Found

Between 2011 and 2013, we issued three reports and 12 recommendations to improve the EPA's NSI program. Based on those recommendations, the EPA improved its controls over the NSI program by including mandatory training, making nondisclosure agreements more readily available to employees with a security clearance, and standardizing performance requirements for employees with a security clearance.

The EPA will continue to improve its national security information program by completing information classification guides that can be used uniformly and consistently throughout the agency.

The EPA completed corrective actions to address all recommendations except for two related to classification guides. Of these two outstanding recommendations, the first calls on the EPA to ensure the preparation, review and approval of appropriate security classification guides, while the other recommends that the EPA ensure the distribution of classification guides to users of the EPA's originally classified information. The original milestone date for finalizing a classification guide approval process was September 30, 2014. According to the EPA, a classification guide is expected to be completed and approved by the Administrator within fiscal year 2016.

During the course of this follow-up review, we also found that it is taking longer to withdraw clearances after EPA employees leave the agency than it did at the time of our June 2012 report. However, adequate controls are in place to prevent former EPA clearance holders from accessing NSI.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management establish controls to ensure that clearances are administratively withdrawn within 30 days of an employee leaving the EPA. The EPA agreed with our recommendation and provided acceptable corrective actions with a projected timeframe for completion. The report recommendation is resolved and open pending completion.