

FOIA TIPS

Interested in submitting a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

Attorney Scott Levine and Special Agent Clay Brown,
both with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Inspector General (OIG),
offer the following tips:

- **Search the FOIAonline [database](#) for previously released documents.**

Before submitting a request, see if the information you are looking for has already been made public. Most responsive records released under previous FOIA requests are published to the FOIAonline database, located on the FOIAonline [webpage](#).

- **Submit requests via the FOIAonline [webpage](#).**

Although the EPA OIG also accepts faxed, mailed or emailed FOIA requests, the most efficient way to submit a FOIA request is via FOIAonline. If you have a request for the EPA OIG, choose *Environmental Protection Agency* from the dropdown list in the Agency Selection box and specify in the Description box that the request is for the OIG .

- **Make requests as specific and narrow as possible.**

The more details you can provide about the information you are seeking, the better our chances of being able to expeditiously provide you with the information you want.

- For requests involving investigations, include case numbers and other details as possible. For example, if you have identified a case of interest in the EPA OIG's latest *Semiannual Report to Congress* (all of which can be found on our [website](#)), include the relevant information in your request.
- Narrow requests to specific documents. Instead of requesting all responsive documents, request the document that is most likely to provide you with the information you are seeking. *Not sure which type of document to request? Refer to the below list of investigative documents that often include information relevant to FOIA requests. Worried that specifying the type of document will prevent you from getting all the information you need? Don't be. You can always submit additional FOIA requests as needed.*

List of Common Investigative Documents

- * *Report of Investigation (ROI)*. This final report summarizes the investigative work completed by the OIG and is prepared for most cases that may require administrative action by the agency. ROIs assist decision makers in determining whether any action will be taken as of the result of the investigative work completed.
- * *Case Closing Report*. This report is completed to close an investigation. It contains specific information about the allegation, the investigation and the final outcome. It is prepared for most investigations.
- * *Memorandum of Interview*. This type of memorandum reports on an interview of a subject or witness and may include documents furnished during the interview.
- * *Memorandum of Activity*. This type of memorandum details a review (e.g., of a contract, file or report) or investigative steps completed.

- **Take advantage of the wealth of FOIA resources.**

Still have questions? Here are some additional references to help you out:

- *The EPA OIG's "FOIA Requests" [webpage](#)*. This resource provides general information about FOIA and details how to submit a FOIA request to the EPA OIG.
- [FOIA.gov](#). The federal government's comprehensive website about FOIA includes a frequently asked questions page, statistics about FOIA requests, and a searchable database of FOIA requests received by agency and year.
- *The FOIA [statute](#)*. Go directly to the source and read 5 U.S.C. § 552.
- *United States Department of Justice [Guide](#) to the Freedom of Information Act*. This online document discusses FOIA's procedural requirements, nine exemptions and litigation considerations.

- **Listen to our FOIA podcast.**

Access our podcasts [webpage](#) and listen to our conversation about EPA OIG FOIA requests.