



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

March 21, 2019

**MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT:** Management Alert: Hotline Concerns over Region 9 Regional Administrator's  
Duty Station and Travel  
Report No. 19-N-0087

**FROM:** Charles J. Sheehan, Acting Inspector General

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles J. Sheehan".

**TO:** Andrew Wheeler, Administrator

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated an assignment to address a hotline complaint regarding Michael Stoker, the Region 9 Regional Administrator. The complaint expressed concerns over Mr. Stoker's time spent away from his duty station in San Francisco, California; the potential for moving the Regional Administrator's duty station to the EPA field office in Los Angeles, California; Mr. Stoker's time spent in the field office in Los Angeles; and his excessive number of trips, including numerous trips to locations in Southern California.

Our objective was to identify the facts relating to Mr. Stoker's duty station and his travel. The purpose of this management alert is to notify you of factual information obtained during our assignment relating to the hotline complaint. We do not anticipate any additional work on this matter.

This assignment was not performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and does not present any conclusions or recommendations.

This report contains no recommendations and you are not required to provide a written response. Should you choose to provide a response, we will post it on the OIG's public website, along with our memorandum commenting on your response. Your response should be provided as an Adobe PDF file that complies with the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The response should not contain data that you do not want to be released to the public; if your response contains such data, you should identify the data for redaction or removal along with corresponding justification.

If you have any questions about this management alert, please contact John Trefry, Director, Forensic Audits, at (202) 566-2474 or [trefry.john@epa.gov](mailto:trefry.john@epa.gov); or Angela Bennett, Project Manager, at (404) 562-9844 or [bennett.angela@epa.gov](mailto:bennett.angela@epa.gov).

**Background**

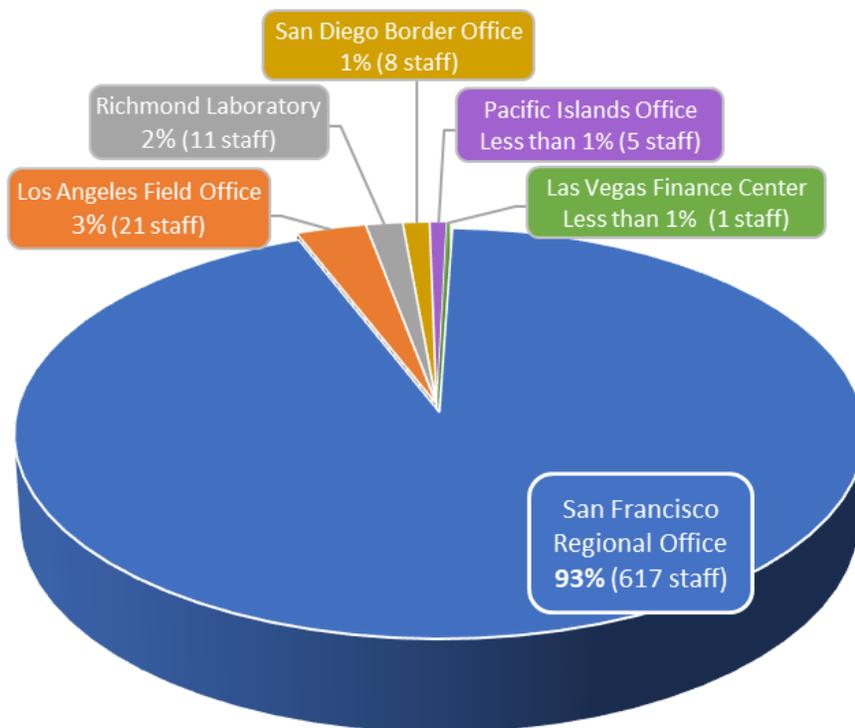
Mr. Stoker was appointed as the Region 9 Administrator on May 20, 2018, by then EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. On May 21, 2018, Mr. Stoker reported to his official duty station at the Region 9 office in

San Francisco, California. As of December 31, 2018, the EPA had a total of 663 employees assigned to Region 9. As shown in Figure 1, of those 663 Region 9 employees, 617, or 93 percent, were assigned to the San Francisco regional office, and 45 employees were assigned to field locations, including the following:

- Los Angeles Field Office (Los Angeles, California).
- Richmond Laboratory (Richmond, California).
- San Diego Border Office (San Diego, California).
- Pacific Islands Office (Honolulu, Hawaii).

Within the past few weeks, a new Chief of Staff (the former Senior Advisor) was appointed for Mr. Stoker. The duty station for the new Chief of Staff is in the EPA’s Finance Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Figure 1: Locations and number of Region 9 staff**



Source: OIG-generated chart based on data from Region 9 Human Resources office.

## What We Found

In early May 2018, the agency’s Office of General Counsel sent a memorandum to the agency’s Chief of Staff in response to a request for advice on whether the EPA can institute a pilot program to establish a duty station for the Region 9 Regional Administrator in Los Angeles instead of San Francisco. Based on a recent OIG inquiry to the agency’s Chief of Staff regarding the memorandum, the OIG learned that Mr. Stoker’s duty station has remained in San Francisco and he has been traveling at his own expense to his residence near Los Angeles. The agency’s Chief of Staff commented that Mr. Stoker has been spending his time in both Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as traveling throughout Region 9. The agency’s Chief of Staff stated that covering California alone is significant, citing numerous issues in the Los Angeles area involving the border, Native American populations, Superfund sites, ports, and other

matters involving the second largest city in the country. The agency’s Chief of Staff stated that these are matters on which he would expect the Regional Administrator to spend a significant amount of his time.

The OIG summarized various aspects of Regional Administrator Stoker’s calendar and travel documents from May 21, 2018, through January 31, 2019. As shown in Table 1, we identified 145 workdays for Mr. Stoker. This count included 30 days spent in the San Francisco office, 19 days in the Los Angeles office, 72 days on official travel, and 24 telework days.

**Table 1: Regional Administrator’s allocation of official time from May 21, 2018, through January 31, 2019**

Location	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	Aug 2018	Sep 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Total
San Francisco	2	7	3	1	5	8	0	2	2	30
Los Angeles	2	0	6	1	1	3	5	1	0	19
Official Travel	4	12	7	18	3	8	8	7	5	72
Telework	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	7	13	24
<b>Total scheduled workdays <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>145</b>

Source: OIG-generated table based on information obtained from Region 9 Administrator’s Office.

<sup>a</sup> The Regional Administrator’s work schedule is 10-hour days, 4 days a week, Monday through Thursday. The data in Table 1 represent the Regional Administrator’s time allocation for his scheduled Monday through Thursday workweek and some instances of work or travel on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays.

As shown in Table 2, Mr. Stoker has taken 35 trips at a cost of \$43,875 for the period May 22, 2018, through January 31, 2019. The trip destinations included numerous locations and were conducted for various purposes, including meetings, conferences and site visits. Of the 35 trips taken, 15 included destinations in Southern California.

**Table 2: Regional Administrator’s travel from May 2018 through January 2019**

	Regional Administrator’s travel period <sup>a</sup>	Travel costs	Destination	Purpose of trip	Location Southern California
1	05/22/18 – 05/25/18	\$959	Ontario, CA	Meetings	Yes
2	05/29/18 – 06/01/18	1,985	Honolulu, HI	Meetings	
3	06/05/18 – 06/09/18	1,215	Phoenix, AZ	Meetings	
4	06/10/18 – 06/14/18	1,563	Chicago, IL	Regional Administrator meetings	
5	06/25/18 – 06/28/18	2,525	Washington, DC	Meetings	
6	07/01/18 – 07/03/18	583	Los Angeles, CA	Site visit	Yes
7	07/08/18 – 07/12/18	968	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings/site visit	Yes
8	07/16/18 – 07/20/18	2,242	Washington, DC	Regional Administrator meetings	
9	07/23/18 – 07/26/18	1,290	Arcata, CA	Site visit	Yes
10	07/29/18 – 07/30/18	571	Los Angeles, CA	Site visit	Yes
11	07/29/18 – 08/02/18	892	Los Angeles, CA	Site visits	Yes
12	08/06/18 – 08/17/18	5,119	Honolulu, HI; Pago Pago, AS <sup>b</sup>	Meetings	
13	08/19/18 – 08/21/18	865	Phoenix, AZ	Meetings	
14	08/22/18 – 08/23/18	385	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings	Yes
15	08/27/18 – 08/30/18	1,554	Stowe, VT	Conference	
16	09/17/18 – 09/17/18	247	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings	Yes
17	09/18/18 – 09/20/18	438	Modesto, CA	Meetings	
18	09/23/18 – 09/24/18	386	Fresno, CA	Conference	
19	09/26/18 – 09/27/18	285	Los Angeles, CA	Event	Yes
20	10/03/18 – 10/05/18	920	Tucson, AZ	Meetings	

	Regional Administrator's travel period <sup>a</sup>	Travel costs	Destination	Purpose of trip	Location Southern California
21	10/09/18 – 10/11/18	515	Los Angeles, CA	Summit	Yes
22	10/13/18 – 10/16/18	1,109	New Orleans, LA	Regional Administrator meeting	
23	10/16/18 – 10/19/18	1,134	Los Angeles, CA; San Diego, CA	Meetings	Yes
24	10/21/18 – 10/22/18	322	Fresno, CA	Press event	
25	10/24/18 – 10/25/18	448	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings	Yes
26	10/31/18 – 11/01/18	406	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings	Yes
27	11/05/18 – 11/09/18	1,331	Los Angeles; San Diego, CA	Meetings	Yes
28	11/15/18 – 11/19/18	180	Elk Hills, CA; Bakersfield, CA	Meetings	
29	11/26/18 – 11/27/18	435	Sacramento, CA	Meetings	
30	11/28/18 – 12/01/18	1,494	Washington, DC	Meetings	
31	12/04/18 – 12/06/18	418	Los Angeles, CA	Meetings	Yes
32	12/07/18 – 12/17/18	5,487	Tokyo City, Japan; Hagatna, GU; <sup>b</sup> Saipan, CNMI <sup>b</sup>	Site visits	
33	12/27/18 – 12/28/18	435	Chico, CA	Site visit	
34	01/22/19 – 01/23/19	471	Chico, CA	Emergency response oversight	
35	01/25/19 – 02/01/19 <sup>c</sup>	4,697	Hagatna, GU; <sup>b</sup> Saipan, CNMI <sup>b</sup>	Emergency response oversight	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$43,875</b>			<b>15</b>

Source: OIG-generated table based on travel data obtained from EPA's Compass Data Warehouse.

- <sup>a</sup> Travel days may differ from those identified in Table 1 due to travel that occurred on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, which is outside of Mr. Stoker's scheduled workdays.
- <sup>b</sup> AS: American Samoa  
CNMI: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
GU: Guam
- <sup>c</sup> The scope of this assignment was from May 21, 2018, through January 31, 2019. This trip went 1 day beyond our scope but was included because the majority of time was within our scope.

As shown in Table 3, Mr. Stoker's travel days ranged from 4 to 17 per month and represented a total of 72, or 50 percent, of his 145 workdays. The number of trips ranged from 2 to 7 per month, for a total of 35 trips. The costs for the trips ranged from \$1,355 per month to \$7,924, for a total of \$43,875.

**Table 3: Regional Administrator's travel details from May 21, 2018 through January 31, 2019**

	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	Aug 2018	Sep 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Total
<b>Scheduled workdays</b>	8	19	17	20	10	19	15	17	20	145
<b>Scheduled workdays on official travel</b>	4	12	7	18	3	8	8	7	5	72
<b>Percent of work days on travel</b>	50%	63%	41%	90%	30%	42%	53%	41%	25%	50%
<b>No. of trips</b>	2	3	6	4	4	7	4	3	2	35
<b>Travel costs</b>	\$2,945	\$5,303	\$6,546	\$7,924	\$1,355	\$4,854	\$3,440	\$6,340	\$5,167	\$43,875

Source: OIG-generated table based on Mr. Stoker's calendar from EPA's website and travel data from EPA's Compass Data Warehouse.

cc: Henry Darwin, Associate Deputy Administrator and Chief of Operations  
Ryan Jackson, Chief of Staff  
Michael Molina, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Holly Greaves, Agency Follow-Up Official (the CFO)  
Bob Trent, Agency Follow-Up Coordinator  
Matthew Leopold, General Counsel  
Troy Lyons, Associate Administrator for Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations  
Corry Schiermeyer, Associate Administrator for Public Affairs  
Serena McIlwain, Director, Office of Continuous Improvement, Office of the Administrator  
Michael Benton, Audit Follow-Up Coordinator, Office of the Administrator  
Donna Vizian, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mission Support  
Michael Stoker, Regional Administrator, Region 9  
Deborah Jordan, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region 9