



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

February 18, 2025

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Response to Planned Corrective Actions for Office of Inspector General
Report No. [24-E-0055](#), *State Program Deficiencies and Inadequate EPA Oversight of State Enforcement Contributed to the Drinking Water Crisis in Jackson, Mississippi*,
issued August 12, 2024

FROM: Nicole N. Murley, Acting Inspector General *Nicole N. Murley*

TO: Jeaneanne M. Gettle, Acting Regional Administrator
Region 4

Thank you for your January 14, 2025 memorandum, which includes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's planned corrective actions and estimated milestone dates for the three unresolved recommendations in the subject Office of Inspector General report. The other four recommendations were either resolved or completed.

Based on the information and supporting documentation provided, we agree that the planned corrective actions for Recommendations 1, 4, and 6 meet the intent of our recommendations. Your response to the three recommendations described Region 4's ongoing efforts to work with the Mississippi State Department of Health to address improvements to its programs. This included instituting monthly meetings, providing direct federal assistance with some program tasks, tracking the Mississippi State Department of Health's implementation progress, and conducting a follow-up file review.

Recommendation 1 said that Region 4 should assess the Mississippi State Department of Health's sanitary survey program to verify that it has appropriate rules, mechanisms, and authorities to ensure that public water systems take necessary steps to address significant deficiencies outlined in sanitary survey reports, per 40 C.F.R. § 142.16. In response, Region 4 identified corrective actions to address some recommendations for improvement identified in its sanitary survey and file-review reports. Region 4 is overseeing the Mississippi State Department of Health's implementation of the department's corrective actions and has requested additional corrective actions to address all recommendations. Region 4 has instituted monthly meetings to refine corrective actions, has provided direct federal assistance with some program tasks, and is tracking implementation progress. Additionally, Region 4 plans to conduct a follow-up file review in 2027. We agree with EPA's corrective actions for Recommendation 1 and consider Recommendation 1 resolved with corrective actions pending.

Recommendation 4 said that Region 4 should verify that the Mississippi State Department of Health has

procedures in place to ensure that water systems report compliance monitoring data to the state pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 141.90, to include verifying that the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory has appropriate procedures in place. In response, Region 4 conducted a file review and subsequently made recommendations and based on the Mississippi State Department of Health's response in November 2024, Region 4 requested additional corrective actions from the Mississippi State Department of Health. Region 4 has instituted monthly meetings with the Mississippi State Department of Health to refine corrective actions, has provided direct federal assistance with some program tasks, and is tracking implementation progress. Additionally, Region 4 plans to conduct a follow-up file review in 2027. We agree with the EPA's corrective actions for Recommendation 4 and consider Recommendation 4 resolved with corrective actions pending.

Recommendation 6 said that Region 4 should evaluate whether the Mississippi State Department of Health is implementing procedures for the enforcement of federal and state drinking water regulations. To address Recommendation 6, Region 4 determined that the Mississippi State Department of Health has not identified sufficient corrective actions to address any of the six recommendations for improvement identified in the Enforcement Review report. The goal of the six recommendations is to ensure that the Mississippi State Department of Health is implementing proper procedures for the enforcement of drinking water regulations. Region 4 has requested additional corrective actions to address all recommendations. Specifically, Region 4 has requested that the Mississippi State Department of Health "provide timelines with interim milestones for the development and implementation of SOPs [standard operating procedures] and plans to fully address the recommendations provided by the EPA" by December 31, 2026. Region 4 believes that the "measures instituted to provide oversight, such as monthly meetings on the resolution, tracking MSDH's [Mississippi State Department of Health's] progress and implementation of the recommendations will result in completion of appropriate corrective actions in a timely manner." Further, Region 4 committed to evaluating all potential options available to the EPA within 90-days of the December 31, 2026 deadline, if corrective actions are not completed by Mississippi State Department of Health. We agree with EPA's corrective actions for Recommendation 6 and consider Recommendation 6 resolved with corrective actions pending.

We consider Recommendations 1, 4, and 6 resolved with corrective actions pending. You should track implementation of the corrective actions in the Agency's audit tracking system until all actions are completed.

We will post this memorandum on our public website at www.epaoig.gov.

cc: César Zapata, Acting Deputy Regional Administrator for Region 4

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