



At a Glance

The EPA Needs to Improve the Verification of Land-Use Controls at Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Corrective Action Facilities

Why We Did This Evaluation

To accomplish this objective:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General conducted this evaluation to determine the extent to which the EPA verifies that Resource Conservation and Recovery Act corrective action land-use controls remain in place to prevent human exposure and groundwater contamination at facilities where contamination remains in place.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, as amended, is the primary law governing the management of solid and hazardous waste. The 1984 Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments to the Act expanded the EPA's authority to require corrective action at treatment, storage, and disposal facilities.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Corrective Action Program Goal 4 indicates that regions and states will have approaches in place by 2025 to ensure that key elements of long-term stewardship, such as overseeing and tracking controls, are implemented.

To support these EPA mission-related efforts:

- *Cleaning up and revitalizing land.*
- *Partnering with states and other stakeholders.*
- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

To address this top EPA [management challenge](#):

- *Safeguarding the use and disposal of chemicals.*

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What We Found

The EPA does not have a national process in place to track or verify the status of land-use controls at Resource Conservation and Recovery Act corrective action facilities. Land-use controls are measures that the EPA and a facility take to control how contaminated land is used to protect human health and the environment. These controls can take both physical and nonphysical forms and can include engineering controls such as fences and non-engineering controls such as deed restrictions.

The EPA has not identified standard methods for long-term oversight of land-use controls at corrective action facilities. Additionally, the EPA regions vary in their progress toward attainment of Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Corrective Action Program Goal 4. Further, EPA information systems that can be used to access program information contain data issues, and the EPA is not using its information systems to track the status of land-use controls. Specifically, the systems contain illogical data and data discrepancies. Without adequate monitoring and tracking, the EPA cannot determine whether land-use controls operate as intended.

If land-use controls do not operate as intended, there is an increased risk that humans and the environment will be exposed to contaminants. Further, land-use control data issues can undermine public confidence and impair the EPA's analyses and decision-making.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We make eight recommendations to improve the verification of land-use controls at Resource Conservation and Recovery Act corrective action facilities. Our recommendations include reconciling existing discrepancies in publicly available land-use controls databases by implementing effective database business rules and developing oversight tools to annually monitor land-use control status at the national level.

The EPA agreed with our recommendations and provided appropriate corrective actions with completion dates. All recommendations are resolved with corrective actions pending.