



At a Glance

Evaluation of Institutional Control Documentation in the Superfund Enterprise Management System on IJJA-Funded Sites

Why We Did This Evaluation

To accomplish this objective:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General conducted this evaluation to determine whether the upgrade to the Superfund Enterprise Management System is likely to facilitate improved documentation of institutional controls in the “Institutional Controls” module.

The EPA uses the Superfund Enterprise Management System to track and manage documents and information about Superfund sites. This includes data that describe the sites’ institutional controls, which are administrative or legal controls that aim to minimize the potential for human exposure to contamination and protect the integrity of a response action by limiting land or resource use and guiding human behavior. Institutional controls are a key part of many long-term cleanup actions taken to prevent or minimize the release or spread of hazardous substances at a Superfund site.

To support these EPA mission-related efforts:

- *Cleaning up and revitalizing land.*
- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

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What We Found

The upgrade to the Superfund Enterprise Management System is unlikely to improve documentation of institutional controls in the system’s “Institutional Controls” module. Currently, EPA staff do not consistently populate institutional control data in the module. Of the 70 Superfund sites we reviewed, 29 sites had implemented institutional controls and 52 sites had planned institutional controls. Fifteen sites had a combination of both, while four sites had neither. However, just over half of the sites with implemented institutional controls and over three quarters of the sites with planned institutional controls did not have any institutional control data in the “Institutional Controls” module. These numbers are notable because the Superfund sites with missing implemented or planned institutional control data have been allocated a total of approximately \$483 million and \$956 million in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds, respectively.

The “Institutional Controls” module in the upgraded Superfund Enterprise Management System does not track institutional controls as independent site activities or performance-based milestones. The system also does not allow users to track planned institutional controls in the “Institutional Controls” module. In addition, the Office of Land and Emergency Management has not mandated that the EPA regions use the system’s “Institutional Controls” module, nor had it issued guidance regarding the purpose and use of the module at the time of our fieldwork. Consequently, the regions do not use the module consistently, and the data in the system do not completely or accurately reflect actual Superfund site conditions. Without internal controls in place to ensure complete and accurate data in the “Institutional Controls” module, neither the Office of Land and Emergency Management nor the EPA regions can effectively use the Superfund Enterprise Management System for oversight, reporting, or meaningful decision-making regarding institutional controls.

Incomplete and inaccurate data limit the EPA’s ability to use the information reported via the Superfund Enterprise Management System to understand trends and maintain awareness about issues at specific Superfund sites.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We make five recommendations to the assistant administrator for Land and Emergency Management to improve the EPA’s tracking and oversight of institutional controls. We recommend that the assistant administrator distribute guidance to the EPA regions regarding institutional control data, develop a process to ensure that the data remain current and up to date, direct the regions to conduct a timely review of the data, and require the regions to enter data into the Superfund Enterprise Management System during their five-year reviews. The EPA concurred with these four recommendations and presented actions to resolve these recommendations. We also recommend that the assistant administrator update the system so that users can track planned institutional controls at Superfund sites. The EPA disagreed with this fifth recommendation, which remains unresolved.