



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The congressional Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change requested that we assess U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) implementation of policies that address climate change at EPA facilities to ensure the EPA was meeting requirements.

To address this request, we evaluated the EPA's implementation of requirements under Executive Order 13514, "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance." To meet the requirements of the order, the EPA developed a 2012 Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan that identified its progress in meeting internal agency goals related to greenhouse gas emissions, among others. We also reviewed the EPA's implementation of EPA Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommendations made in 2011 to adjust its greenhouse gas reductions goal based on funding and project status.

This report addresses the following EPA goals or cross-agency strategies:

- Addressing climate change and improving air quality.
- Working toward a sustainable future.

For further information, contact our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2014/20140729-14-P-0325.pdf

EPA Met or Exceeded Most Internal Climate Change Goals, But Data Quality and Records Management Procedures Need Improvement

Most Climate Change Goals Met

The EPA adhered to most climate change requirements for federal agencies. With a few exceptions, the EPA provided documentation to support its reported 2012 accomplishments. The EPA exceeded its climate change goals and requirements related to water use, greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy. The EPA was one of only three agencies out of 25 reporting that received a green scorecard on the OMB sustainability scorecard for fiscal year (FY) 2013 and has achieved a green scorecard the last 3 years. In addition, the EPA voluntarily tracks and reports data for its leased buildings that are 50,000 square feet or larger. In response to the recommendation from the 2011 OIG report, the EPA incorporated a review of its greenhouse gas reduction goals as part of its annual Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan submission, and it agreed to make adjustments to the overall reduction goal as needed. Since the agency is on track to meet its 2020 greenhouse gas reduction goals and it has developed a process to revise the goals, we believe this prior OIG recommendation has been addressed.

Improving data quality and records management procedures can support confidence in the reliability of EPA's progress reports on its climate change goals.

Areas Where Improvements Are Needed

We identified several internal control weaknesses in the EPA's data quality assurance procedures and adherence to its Records Management Policy that need to be addressed. The agency relies heavily on a contractor to collect water and energy data used in the 2012 Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan and also relies on the contractor to perform its own quality assurance review of data presented in the plan, which, due to EPA inattention, could increase the likelihood that inaccurate data gets overlooked. Further, we identified data errors in the plan. The agency also lacks sufficient internal controls for electronic stewardship and data center accomplishments reported in the plan. Additionally, we identified areas where the EPA was not in full compliance with the agency's Records Management Policy. Specifically, EPA accomplishment data reported in the 2012 Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan related to fleet management, waste diversion and acquisitions have not been appropriately maintained and documented.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the agency establish procedures to conduct a quality assurance review of Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan data provided by the contractor and EPA program offices. We also recommend that the agency develop and implement procedures for maintaining and securing records associated with production of the annual Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan in accordance with the EPA's Records Management Policy. The agency agreed with our recommendations and provided a corrective action plan.