



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

Ethylene Oxide/Informing Area Residents About Health Concerns: U.S. EPA Office of Inspector General Issues Management Alert

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The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") Office of Inspector General ("OIG") issued a March 31st management alert titled:

Prompt Action Needed to Inform Residents Living Near Ethylene Oxide-Emitting Facilities About Health Concerns and Actions to Address Those Concerns ("Alert")

See Report No. 20-N-0128.

The Report is transmitted from OIG's Sean W. O'Donnell to EPA Associate Deputy Administrator Doug Benevento.

The *Alert* states that OIG is notifying EPA of the matter because of the:

... disparity in the extent and nature of communication between the EPA and impacted communities where the EPA has identified significant health risks to the public from ethylene oxide emissions.

OIG states it discovered this issue while conducting an audit of EPA's actions to address air toxics emissions through its residual risk and technology review program.

Ethylene Oxide ("EtO") is a flammable, colorless gas. Key uses for EtO include:

- Production of other chemicals that are used to create everyday products (i.e., antifreeze, plastics, detergents, etc.)
- Sterilize devices that cannot be sterilized using steam (i.e., medical and dental equipment)

EPA has classified EtO as a given carcinogen. Further, the Clean Air Act lists EtO as a Section 112 hazardous air pollutant.

Related EPA activities and actions that OIG believes should be addressed in the following subchapters include:

- Communities Should Have Access to Information to Help Manage Health Risks
- EPA or State Agencies Have Held Public Meetings with Residents Living Near Five High-Priority Facilities
- EPA Plans to Conduct Direct Outreach Efforts to Inform Residents Living Near Five High-Priority Facilities

- EPA Does Not Have Plans to Conduct Direct Outreach Efforts to Inform Residents Living Near 11 High-Priority Facilities

The principal recommendation put forth by OIG is summarized as stating:

Improve and continue to implement ongoing risk communication efforts by promptly providing residents in all communities near the 25 ethylene oxide-emitting facilities identified as high-priority by the EPA with a forum for an interactive exchange of information with the EPA or the states regarding health concerns related to exposure to ethylene oxide.

A copy of the *Alert* can be downloaded [here](#).