



# At a Glance

*Catalyst for Improving the Environment*

## Why We Did This Review

We sought to answer the question: how well do the policies, procedures, and plans of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) help ensure that its climate change research fulfills its role in climate change?

## Background

EPA is 1 of 13 federal agencies that make up the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, which guides federal research through its strategic plan. Part of EPA's role is understanding the regional consequences of global change. EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) handles this function. EPA's Office of Air and Radiation conducts activities related to mitigating greenhouse gases. ORD manages EPA's climate change research function through its Global Change Research Program.

**For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.**

**To view the full report, click on the following link:**  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2009/20090202-09-P-0089.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2009/20090202-09-P-0089.pdf)

## ***EPA Needs a Comprehensive Research Plan and Policies to Fulfill its Emerging Climate Change Role***

### **What We Found**

EPA does not have an overall plan to ensure developing consistent, compatible climate change strategies across the Agency. We surveyed EPA regions and offices and found they need more information on a variety of climate change topics. They need technical climate change research and tools as well as other climate change policy guidance and direction. We learned that, in the absence of an overall Agency plan, EPA's Office of Water and several regional offices have independently developed, or are developing, their own individual climate change strategies and plans. The lack of an overall climate change policy can result in duplication, inconsistent approaches, and wasted resources among EPA's regions and offices. EPA has not issued interim guidance to give its major components consistent direction to ensure that a compatible national policy – when it emerges – will not result in wasted efforts.

EPA's latest plan for future climate change research does not address the full range of emerging information needs. Specifically, the projected time of completion or the scope of some research projects do not match the timing or the scope of regions' needs. ORD does not have a central repository of its climate change research for its internal users, nor does it effectively communicate the results of its climate change research to EPA's internal users. While ORD collects research requirements from regions and program offices, the selection criteria for research topics are not transparent to the regions. Finally, ORD does not have a system to track research requests through completion, or a formal mechanism to obtain feedback from its users.

### **What We Recommend**

We recommend that the Deputy Administrator direct Assistant and Regional Administrators on how to plan for climate change challenges in their media areas/regions until the Agency develops an overall strategy; and establish guidance for regularly entering their climate change scientific information in the Science Inventory. We also recommend that the Assistant Administrator for ORD establish various management controls to ensure EPA fulfills its emerging climate change role and related information needs. The Agency concurred with our recommendations.