



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Glynn Environmental Coalition, a nonprofit community organization, brought to the Ombudsman's attention concerns about toxaphene at a Superfund site in Georgia.

Background

Toxaphene is an agricultural pesticide that was heavily used in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. EPA banned it for most uses in 1982, and for all uses in 1990, because it posed a risk of significant adverse impacts on humans and the environment. To further protect people from the effects of toxaphene, EPA limited how much toxaphene can be in drinking water and required related monitoring. The EPA Superfund program is cleaning up numerous sites contaminated with toxaphene.

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:

www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20051216-2006-P-00007.pdf

More Information Is Needed On Toxaphene Degradation Products

What We Found

Toxaphene in the environment changes, or degrades. The resulting degradation products are different from the original toxaphene in chemical composition and how they appear to testing instruments, so they could go unreported. The analytical methods EPA uses to identify and measure toxaphene are not designed to identify toxaphene degradation products. However, a new testing method used by others specifically tests for toxaphene degradation products. We believe EPA should validate, approve, and use this method.

Certain toxaphene degradation products accumulate inside people. Although studies indicate that some of these degradation products may be harmful, more research is needed to determine how much of a risk these products pose to people.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the EPA Administrator direct

- The Assistant Administrators for Water and for Solid Waste and Emergency Response to validate and approve the new analytical method that tests for toxaphene degradation products, and use the new method to analyze environmental samples.
- The Assistant Administrator for Research and Development to work with others in EPA to arrange for the specific research needed to determine the risk that toxaphene degradation products may pose to people.