



# At a Glance

*Catalyst for Improving the Environment*

## Why We Did This Review

This review was conducted in conjunction with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency as part of its examination of relief efforts provided by the Federal Government in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We conducted this review to assess the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) response efforts related to oil spills, hazardous materials, Superfund sites, and debris and waste management.

## Background

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall, leaving behind a trail of destruction in three States. In Louisiana and Mississippi, the storm created an estimated 86 million cubic yards of debris; caused the spill of more than 7 million gallons of oil; produced floodwaters that deposited hazardous substances in sediments; and passed over 18 Superfund National Priority List sites and more than 400 industrial facilities that store or manage hazardous materials.

**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/2006/20060502-2006-P-00023.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20060502-2006-P-00023.pdf)

## ***EPA Provided Quality and Timely Information on Hurricane Katrina Hazardous Material Releases and Debris Management***

### **What We Found**

Following Hurricane Katrina, EPA was the Federal agency with lead responsibility to prevent, minimize, or mitigate threats to public health and the environment caused by hazardous materials and oil spills in inland zones. EPA responsibilities also included providing oversight and assistance in the management of hurricane-generated debris and waste.

EPA established quality and timely approaches for rapidly identifying, prioritizing, and assessing the nature, magnitude, and impact of hazardous material releases:

- EPA coordinated with State, local, and other Federal government agencies to assess potential environmental and human health impacts from Hurricane Katrina and provided quality and timely information for determining risks and impacts in EPA's areas of responsibility and oversight.
- On its own, or in partnership with State, local, or other Federal agencies, EPA provided information on chemicals present in sediment samples, and assessed results of damage or releases at all Superfund National Priority List sites in the path of the Hurricane, more than 400 industrial facilities, and approximately 850 Louisiana underground storage tanks.

Also, EPA is providing quality and timely oversight, assistance, and direct support in managing hurricane hazardous debris and waste throughout the affected areas:

- EPA distinguished between hazardous and non-hazardous debris and is ensuring consistency in segregation through its management of hazardous wastes and oversight assistance at various landfills and staging areas.
- EPA provided the public with information on how to properly dispose of household hazardous waste, and collected over 2.5 million hazardous waste containers in Louisiana.
- EPA provided information to the States, and the States and EPA have worked together to address challenges in Katrina recovery and cleanup efforts.

EPA responded to issues and questions we raised about response and cleanup progress. We make no recommendations.