



GENERAL SECTION

Proposed Management Reforms of the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Dr. Paul Gilman, a science advisor to U.S. EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman, has proposed changes to the management of the IRIS database. The EPA and other federal, state, local, and international agencies currently use IRIS to help assess the risk from chemicals and establish regulatory standards. Environmental Risk Assessors use information within IRIS to complete toxicity assessments, which are a fundamental part of the risk assessment process. Currently several EPA offices prepare and maintain the IRIS electronic database which contains information on human health effects that may result from exposure to various chemicals in the environment.

The proposed changes are associated with three problems that are inherent in the maintenance of the IRIS database. The problems are:

- Delays in updates.
- Information is developed inconsistently.
- Consideration of all health risks is not fully considered.

Dr. Gilman has described reforms of the IRIS database with agency staff and expects to propose the changes to Congress by the end of the year. The proposed reforms would include:

- Make one EPA office responsible for the development of IRIS documents.
- Increase the number of full-time employees working on the program.
- Accelerate the pace at which information in IRIS is updated.
- Adopt procedures to ensure that external scientists, who peer review IRIS information, do not evaluate a document if that would pose a conflict of interest.
- Add additional information to IRIS entries.

APPLICABILITY

IRIS (www.epa.gov/iris) is a tool that provides hazard identification and dose-response assessment information, but does not provide situational information on individual instances of exposure. Combined with specific exposure information as part of the overall risk assessment process, the data in IRIS can be used for characterization of the public health risk of a given chemical in a given situation that can then lead to a risk management decision designed to protect public health and/or facilitate a decision for remediation options. It can also assist expert witnesses in litigation matters.

SUMMARY

The EPA Administrator's science advisor has proposed changes to the IRIS database. These changes should "populate the debate around environmental and ecological health with facts that are of high quality work...and appropriately peer reviewed."

If you would like assistance with chemical hazard identification and how it can relate to your risk management decisions, please contact Mark Berkich, Maria Vieth or Dan Weed at 513-489-2255 or through e-mail at meb@paynefirm.com, mrav@paynefirm.com, or ddw@paynefirm.com.