Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

Authors
Miriam Rotkin-Ellman, MPH
Mayra Quirindongo, MPA / MSES
Jennifer Sass, Ph.D.
Gina Solomon, M.D., MPH

Natural Resources Defense Council
ABOUT NRDC
The Natural Resources Defense Council is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 1.2-million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org.

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Executive Summary

When it comes to protecting public health from dangerous contaminants, the Bush Administration has left a legacy of dismal failure. We rely on the government to monitor contaminants and hazardous residues to ensure that we know our food, water, air, communities, and consumer products are safe. For decades, federal agencies charged with safeguarding health and the environment have tracked pollution, required industry reporting, and monitored disease rates. These programs provide the foundation for all health and environmental protection. Without adequate monitoring, the public, the scientific community, and the government are unaware of the hazards around us. New NRDC research shows that the Bush administration has dangerously slashed federal environmental and health monitoring programs.

During the eight years of the Bush Administration, the federal government has quietly eliminated or crippled more than a dozen essential monitoring programs. Budget cuts, restructuring, program termination, and removal of industry reporting requirements have been steadily undermining or eliminating the information that alerts us to problems in our air, water, food, or communities. Programs that directly track human health have also been slashed, creating gaps in our information about infectious disease outbreaks, chemical exposures in people, and chronic disease.

Environmental Health Protections That Have Been Cut Back Must Be Restored

NRDC evaluated the current state of federal environmental and health monitoring programs at the end of the Bush Administration in five key areas: air, water, food safety, toxic substances, and human health. We found a disturbing and pervasive pattern of program funding cuts that make it impossible for programs to fulfill their monitoring role.
Some of the worst examples include:

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will not have enough information to enforce the new air standard for lead, since hundreds of communities near lead polluters will not have testing of their air quality and the lead monitoring network has been cut by half over the past decade.

- The Bush Administration has proposed to eliminate requirements that “Factory Farms” and similar facilities report the air pollution from animal waste. This proposal may be finalized before January, even though many such facilities pollute the air more than large industrial factories.

- The EPA decided to no longer require drinking water systems to monitor for two dangerous pollutants—perchlorate and MTBE. Previous monitoring had revealed both pollutants to be widespread in drinking water supplies. Perchlorate interferes with thyroid gland function, and MTBE is a suspected carcinogen.

- EPA finalized a rule that will exempt companies from reporting some or all of their toxic pollution. Several states are challenging this rule in court.

- Budget cuts at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will devastate two programs that test groundwater and surface water for pesticides, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, hormone disruptors, and other toxic chemicals.

- A USGS program that monitors stream flow also suffered crippling budget cuts, even though climate change will result in more flooding and a greater need for accurate and up-to-date stream flow information.

- The already tight budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) program that tracks food-related illness was cut by more than $2 million, at a time when some foodborne illness outbreaks have been increasing.

- The CDC Biomonitoring Program, which measures pollution in people, has been cut by nearly 20 percent since 2002.

In addition to these devastating cuts, numerous other important monitoring programs have been left to wither with insufficient resources and without the necessary budget increases to cover rising costs. If this decline is not reversed soon, we can expect alarming and belated discoveries of contaminants in our food, water, and household products. Even worse, many health hazards will remain undiscovered and unaddressed, posing a long-term health risk to ourselves and our families.
A Los Angeles Community Feels the Effects of Monitoring Cutbacks

Duncan McKee has lived in his neighborhood in Los Angeles for 49 years, and his daughter spent most of her childhood there. There are three polluters near Mr. McKee’s home—Distinctive Appliances Inc., Hill Brothers Chemical Co., and Lansco Die Casting Inc.—that no longer report their pollution due to Bush Administration cuts in monitoring and reporting programs. Currently, these facilities release or dispose of extremely dangerous chemicals such as diisocyanates, ammonia, and heavy metals. In addition, there is a large battery manufacturing facility near his house that pollutes the air with lead. Mr. McKee said: “The neighbors know that the facility burns plastic and rubber casings; when that’s going on, just one whiff of the air and you get a splitting headache.” There are families with children living within 500 feet of the battery manufacturing facility, and there are 26 schools within four miles. The fine dust from this facility is “stuff that you really can’t get away from – it penetrates your house, kids are breathing it in, and kids get it on their hands and in their mouths.” Twelve people within two square blocks are suffering from cancer. Children in the neighborhood have leukemia and Hodgkin’s lymphoma. They don’t know if the cancer is from the local polluters, but people in the community are worried and they say that the government does not have strong enough standards or strong enough enforcement of standards that are already on the books.


Recommendations For Restoring Strong Public Health Protections

There is a simple solution for reinstating the regulations that protect our public health: the programs proposed for elimination should be retained, the budgets should be restored, and the reporting requirements for industry should be reinstated. These programs are not expensive; restoring slashed budgets would require approximately $133 million—or 0.02 percent of the recent $700 billion bank bailout. What’s more, monitoring programs pay for themselves by preventing pollution and disease and by identifying problems that need to be addressed before they cost our health care system and taxpayers many more millions of dollars. For example, one study estimated the contribution of environmental pollution to lead poisoning, asthma, cancer, and neurobehavioral disorders in children as costing almost $55 billion a year.

And the examples contained in this report may be just the tip of the iceberg; a system-wide accounting is needed to ensure the adequacy of environmental and health monitoring. This should be done by an independent body such as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) or the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must also work together to restore the protections we all deserve. (For specific recommendations on how government agencies can reinstate needed environmental health regulations, see chapter 6.)
### TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF MONITORING PROGRAMS AFFECTED BY CUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring for lead pollution in the air</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>↓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring hazardous air pollutants from factory farms</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring pollution from industrial sources</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>↔ ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing drinking water for industrial pollutants</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing and tracking pollution in surface and groundwater</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>USGS</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring stream-flow and flooding</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>USGS</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring pesticide levels in urban waterways</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>EPA &amp; State Agencies</td>
<td>↔ ⚫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring pollutants in stormwater run-off</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>EPA &amp; State Agencies</td>
<td>↔ ⚫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking food-related diarrheal illnesses</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>↓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recording levels of pesticide use on farms</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing fish for unsafe mercury levels</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>FDA</td>
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<td>Testing food for pesticide residues</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>USDA &amp; FDA</td>
<td>↔ ⚫</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring honey bee colony health</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>↔ ⚫</td>
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<td>Reporting of industrial pollution from factories</td>
<td>Toxics</td>
<td>EPA</td>
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<td>EPA</td>
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<td>Toxics</td>
<td>CDC</td>
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<td>Performing environmental justice assessments</td>
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<td>Testing consumer products for safety</td>
<td>Toxics</td>
<td>CPSC</td>
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<td>Human Health</td>
<td>CDC</td>
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<td>Testing for chemicals in people (Biomonitoring)</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
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<td>Tracking occupational asthma and pesticide illnesses</td>
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<td>NIOSH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracking and linking environmental exposures and health effects</td>
<td>Human Health</td>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>↔ ⚫</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↓ BUDGET OR PROGRAM CUT

X Eliminated

↔ No change

* Inadequate and requires expansion

† Restored due to court intervention
CHAPTER 1

What Is Monitoring and Why Do We Need It?

The safety of our food, water, air, communities, and consumer products relies on constant monitoring and reporting of contaminants and hazardous residues. For example, routine local air quality testing alerts communities to health risks from bad air days. Regular testing of water supplies informs communities of drinking water contamination. Testing food for pesticide residues helps regulators set health-protective pesticide regulations and track their effectiveness. Public health and illness monitoring identifies epidemics ranging from food poisoning to childhood asthma and obesity. Monitoring and reporting of pollution levels and emissions is a critical component of any successful system to protect the environment and human health.

Failures of federal government monitoring and reporting programs have been apparent in recent years with discoveries of widespread contaminants that can cause illness and death such as lead in toys, pesticides in pet food, melamine in milk products, and bacteria in fresh vegetables. These problems should have been detected sooner and traced rapidly to their sources so they could be addressed. Instead, the government’s failure to implement effective monitoring left consumers vulnerable for too long to contaminants that were unknown until people became ill.

Many environmental health scientists were not surprised by these and other blatant examples of broken government monitoring systems. In recent years, and especially during the eight years of the Bush Administration, many monitoring and reporting programs that protect the public from contaminants have been unraveling because of declining budgets, program cuts, and regulatory exemptions. The data from these programs provide essential information on how much pollution people have been exposed to and for how long. Scientists use this information to calculate the risk that pollutants may pose to human health and the environment. In addition, the data can help determine whether or not different pollution control strategies are effective.
Long-term monitoring and reporting programs reveal trends in contamination levels that tell us where things are improving and where they are getting worse. This trend information allows targeted responses and gives the public real information about the effectiveness of government health and environmental regulations. This information can also enable the public to identify and pressure local polluters to clean up. It is not surprising that robust environmental monitoring and reporting programs are not always popular with polluting industries.

This report documents a pattern across federal agencies to slash environmental and health monitoring and reporting programs. Our analysis uncovered systematic cutbacks in pollution monitoring by multiple federal agencies. We also discovered serious cuts in health programs designed to track disease. Whether it’s the closing of air monitoring stations, elimination of drinking water testing, or deep cuts in programs that identify outbreaks of foodborne illness, these cuts jeopardize public accountability and the ability to effectively identify and correct problem areas.
Air pollution is a significant problem, especially for people with respiratory or cardiac disease, children, and outdoor athletes. The EPA and state and local agencies are responsible for tracking air quality over time and imposing pollution control requirements to reduce contamination levels. Having accurate information on air pollution levels is essential for scientists, government agencies, and the public. However, the EPA has cut back on the monitoring of air quality. This leaves people in the dark about the real extent of contamination in the air and makes it harder to control pollution.

**What Happened?**
The lead air monitoring network has been drastically reduced over the last decade. Additionally, in October 2008, the EPA changed the threshold for locating monitors near polluters.
Why Does It Matter?
There are more than 16,000 lead polluters in the United States with reported airborne lead emissions totaling approximately 3.4 million pounds. Lead is a potent neurotoxin, known to interfere with normal brain development in infants and children. Lead is also linked to numerous chronic diseases including increased blood pressure, kidney damage, and cognitive impairment in the elderly. Lead levels in the air remain a health threat in thousands of communities, and this same airborne lead eventually settles and can contaminate the soil where children play.

However, the number of lead air monitors across the country has been cut in half, from 394 monitors in 1997 to only 188 monitors in 2007. The EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee found this level insufficient and recommended that the lead monitoring network be substantially expanded. EPA’s own calculations show that a network of more than 650 lead monitors are necessary in areas downwind of polluters, and an additional 330 or more monitors are needed in urban areas. Currently, 24 of the 26 largest lead polluters in the nation have no air monitor located within one mile. Thus, most people have no way of knowing how much lead is in the air they breathe and in the dust that settles on the ground in their gardens.

In October 2008, EPA finalized a new and more health-protective standard for airborne lead. However, as part of the new plan, the EPA raised the monitoring threshold from a half ton per year of lead emissions to 1 ton per year. That means that polluters who release up to 2,000 pounds of lead each year into local communities will not be monitored under the new lead rule. Furthermore, the EPA required only one monitor in cities with populations more than 500,000 people, and no monitors in smaller cities. EPA estimates that the new rule will create a need for “236 new or relocated monitors.” The new EPA rule means that the lead monitoring network will be inadequate to assess whether many affected communities are in violation of the national standard for airborne lead.
**Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration**

**FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF ACTIVE LEAD MONITORS (1997-2007)**

![Graph showing the number of active lead monitors from 1997 to 2007. The number decreased by 30% during the Bush Administration.](source: USEPA Office of Air and Radiation AQS Database)

**Lead Contamination in Missouri Hits Children First**

Leslie and Jack Warden raised their son in Jefferson County, Missouri. They lived for 25 years in the town of Herculaneum, less than a mile from the Doe Run lead smelter. Their son Erik, now struggling to complete junior college, has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Their niece and nephew, who lived just one block away, were both diagnosed with lead poisoning. For years Mrs. Warden said that she and all her neighbors assumed that everything was OK in their small town, since “that’s what everyone from the government told us.” In 1999, when they finally learned about the widespread air and soil pollution, and all the children with lead poisoning, they felt duped and betrayed. Now she is upset about the dismantling of the lead air monitoring network, saying: “They think it’s OK to use our children as lead monitors; that would be the only air monitor we’d have left in this community is our children.”

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What Should Be Done to Restore the Lead Monitoring Network?

1) Re-build and expand the lead monitoring network to include more than 650 source-oriented monitors near major lead polluters across the country. At a minimum, all polluters who emit more than a half ton per year of lead into the air should have an air monitor located downwind to assure that the community is protected.

2) Deploy a minimum of two non-source-oriented monitors in urban areas with a population greater than 500,000 people; at least three lead monitors in any urban area with a population greater than 1 million; and a minimum of five non-source-oriented monitors in urban areas with a population over 2 million.

What Happened?
The EPA proposed eliminating reporting requirements for hazardous air emissions caused by animal waste.

Why Does It Matter?
In December 2007, the EPA issued a proposed rule that would apply to all hazardous substances released into the air from animal waste. The proposed rule creates an exemption from the reporting requirements in two important federal laws: CERCLA, the pollution notification and response statute commonly known as “Superfund,” and EPCRA, the nation’s landmark “right-to-know” law. Air emissions from animal waste include ammonia and hydrogen sulfide, which are both currently listed as hazardous substances under CERCLA. The livestock sector accounts for roughly 73 percent of all ammonia emissions nationwide.6

Air emissions reporting is critical to protecting public health because livestock waste is a known source of ammonia and hydrogen sulfide. These pollutants can cause asthma and other respiratory diseases, nasal and eye irritation, and in extreme cases loss of consciousness and even death.7 Ammonia also reacts with nitrogen oxides to form fine particulate matter, which is associated with heart and lung disease.8

Because factory farms are already exempt from regulations under the Clean Air Act, CERCLA and EPCRA are the only protections communities still have. These laws give communities information about air pollution from animal waste, allow scientists to examine health impacts in light of the data, and help health agencies respond to problems and track improvements over time. They also provide a way for communities and the government to hold polluters accountable for air pollution originating from their operations. The reporting requirements provide a measure of public accountability, encouraging livestock operators to improve waste management and include the costs of pollution mitigation in their business plans. These measures are particularly important given the increasing size and concentration of animal agricultural operations in the United States.

There is no scientific basis for exempting livestock operations from reporting emissions that originate from animal waste. Rather, the proposed rule was requested by industry groups following two federal court decisions applying the reporting requirements in CERCLA and EPCRA to animal facilities. The EPA continues to recognize that ammonia and hydrogen
sulfide emissions pose a public health threat—the proposed rule would still require operations to report their release from other on-farm sources, including fertilizer storage facilities.

What Should Be Done to Protect People from Factory Farm Toxic Emissions?

1. The EPA should abandon the proposed rule and continue to require livestock operations to comply with the reporting requirements of these statutes when they release hazardous substances at levels that may jeopardize public health.

2. The EPA should exercise its authority under CERCLA to require livestock operations to clean up unpermitted releases of hazardous waste to the environment.

3. Congress should increase funding for research to characterize air emissions and exposures from livestock operations and examine their health and environmental impacts. Consistent with the recommendations of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, “[s]uch research should include characterization of mixed exposures, studies of particulates in rural areas, and standardization and harmonization of exposure assessment methods and instrumentation to the degree possible.” Research on respiratory and other health impacts should be conducted on both community members and workers exposed to livestock pollution.

4. The EPA should conduct research to develop and promote the use of biofilters, manure storage and treatment techniques, diet manipulation, and other mitigation measures that can reduce the generation and release of hazardous substances from animal waste into the environment.

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Air Pollution Monitoring Lost Under Proposed Rule

- Threemile Canyon Farms in Boardman, Oregon, reported in 2003 that its 52,300 dairy cow operation emitted 15,500 pounds of ammonia per day, more than 5.6 million pounds per year. That amount was 75,000 pounds more than the nation’s number 1 manufacturing source of ammonia air pollution.

- In 2003, Buckeye Egg Farm’s facility in Croton, Ohio, reported ammonia emissions of more than 4,300 pounds per day—43 times the 100-pound reporting threshold under CERCLA and EPCRA.

- A 2001 case against Premium Standard Farms (PSF) and Continental Grain found that PSF operations in Missouri—which housed 1.25 million hogs and stored animal waste in 163 lagoons—exposed downwind neighbors to elevated levels of ammonia as well as other pollutants. Measurements taken after the settlement revealed that PSF operations released 3 million pounds of ammonia annually from the cluster of barns and lagoons at its Somerset, Missouri, facility. These emissions made PSF the fifth largest industrial emitter of ammonia in the United States.4

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In a great victory for public health, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit invalidated in August 2008 an EPA rule that would have reduced the monitoring of air pollution from industrial sources. The rule, issued in late 2006 and challenged by NRDC and other environmental groups, prohibited state regulatory agencies from requiring supplemental air pollution monitoring when granting permits to polluting facilities without enough monitoring to ensure that they are complying with air quality regulations.a, b The EPA declared that major stationary sources of air pollution need not undertake enhanced monitoring of particulate matter, NOₓ, SO₂, volatile organic compounds, and hazardous air pollutants as long as sources were required to do some other type of periodic monitoring—no matter how infrequent that monitoring or no matter how inadequate to ensure a source’s compliance with air quality requirements.

This EPA rule would have prevented states from requiring necessary monitoring to determine source compliance with applicable air quality requirements. The rule would have allowed more pollution problems to remain undetected, potentially exceeding air quality standards and endangering the health of communities exposed to smog-forming contaminants and other forms of hazardous air pollution. The EPA may appeal the court ruling, but based on the strength of the court majority’s opinion, such an appeal would be unlikely to succeed.


CHAPTER 3

Water Quality Programs

Contaminants in drinking water, such as bacteria, parasites, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, and other toxic chemicals, can pose health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations such as infants, pregnant women, and individuals with compromised immune systems. Some toxic chemicals known to occur in drinking water in the United States remain unregulated, leaving consumers unprotected. Testing water for these contaminants provides the information necessary to begin the process of setting drinking water standards and reducing or eliminating water contamination. Monitoring is also important because it gives consumers the information they need to protect their health in the absence of effective regulations. A commitment to long-term monitoring of our nation’s waterways and drinking water is essential for identifying contaminants, quantifying exposure, locating contamination, and measuring the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

What Happened?
Public water systems will no longer have to monitor for perchlorate and MTBE, despite the fact that the frequency and levels at which they have been found in drinking water create concern for public health.

Why Does It Matter?
The EPA did not include the contaminants perchlorate and methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE) in its list of contaminants to be monitored by public water systems under the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 2 (UCMR 2), which will require all large public water systems serving more than 10,000 people and a sample of smaller systems to test drinking water for a variety of contaminants for which there are no drinking water standards. Perchlorate and MTBE were previously monitored, but without continued monitoring, the public has no way of knowing whether these dangerous pollutants are in their drinking water.
Perchlorate is a toxic chemical used in rocket fuel and explosives. It is found in numerous hazardous waste sites across the country and prior testing required by the EPA revealed that it has infiltrated water supplies in at least 26 states and two U.S. territories. A total of 160 of the 3,870 water systems tested (4.1 percent) detected perchlorate in their water. These systems served a population of 32 million. Additionally, perchlorate has been found in food items such as lettuce and milk because of contaminated irrigation water. Perchlorate interferes with thyroid hormones, which can lead to disruptions in growth and development of the brain in fetuses and young children.

MTBE is a fuel additive associated with testicular cancer, kidney cancer, lymphoma, and leukemia in animal studies. MTBE was found in 19 water systems in 14 states during prior testing. A U.S. Geological Survey study of 12 states in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region found that 7.8 percent of the 1,074 systems surveyed from 1993 through 1998 had MTBE. A random survey of the water sources of 954 public water systems conducted from 1999 through 2000 revealed that the source water of 8.7 percent of those systems contained MTBE.

In September 2008, the EPA issued a proposed determination not to set a drinking water standard for perchlorate despite the fact that the EPA estimates that up to 16.6 million Americans are exposed to perchlorate at a level many scientists consider unsafe. The EPA says it has not made a regulatory determination on MTBE because its health assessment for this chemical is under revision. The MTBE health assessment is not expected to be completed until 2011. Therefore, a regulatory determination and any potential regulation that sets monitoring requirements for MTBE are years away.

Prior monitoring for both of these chemicals revealed their widespread occurrence in drinking water. The EPA has failed to establish drinking water standards (known as Maximum Contaminant Levels, or MCLs) for these two widespread contaminants and has now stopped monitoring them in drinking water. Because of these actions, there will be no future information on their occurrence and potential threats to drinking water quality.

**What Should Be Done to Monitor the Safety of Drinking Water?**

1. The EPA should resume monitoring for perchlorate and MTBE in drinking water.
2. The EPA should set drinking water standards for perchlorate and MTBE. These standards must protect populations at greatest risk, such as pregnant women and children.
3. If the EPA refuses to act, Congress should require the agency to monitor for perchlorate and set a drinking water standard that will protect vulnerable pregnant women, infants and children.
Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

Both water quality programs will suffer devastating blows if the proposed FY09 budget cuts are enacted. These deep cuts in monitoring will make it very difficult to protect the nation's waterways effectively.

The NAWQA tests for pesticides, volatile organic compounds, metals, and other environmental contaminants. Budget constraints over the last eight years have forced NAWQA to cut three-quarters of its surface-water, fixed-station water quality monitoring sites, from 496 in 2000 to only 113 in 2008. Ground water quality monitoring sites will be cut in half because of a 15 percent ($10 million) cut in funding from FY08 to FY09.

The Toxic Substances Hydrology (Toxics) Program is a water quality research and methods development program that examines new and understudied environmental contaminants including pharmaceutical and hormone-disrupting chemicals, as well as mercury, arsenic, and nanomaterials. The Toxics Program develops new capabilities, new methodologies, and new information that enable state water quality programs and NAWQA to address new issues effectively. FY08 funding for the Toxics Program is $13.5 million; for FY09 the request is $10.7 million, reflecting a nearly $3 million cut from the USGS budget.

What Should Be Done to Restore Critical Water Quality Testing?
1. Restore at least $10 million to the budget for the NAWQA immediately and increase funding to needed levels over the coming fiscal years.
2. Restore the budget for the Toxics Program at USGS to at least the FY08 level of $13.5 million.

What Happened?
Serious budget cuts made to the USGS National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) jeopardize critical flood monitoring. This information is used to develop emergency response plans, predict floods, and measure climate change.

Why Does It Matter?
The NSIP provides reliable data for:
- Monitoring compliance with water use agreements
- Designing bridges, dams, and other infrastructure
- Forecasting storm surge, floods, and drought
- Monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands, and endangered species
- Providing data for public recreation safety
- Analyzing climate change impacts
- Projecting future water availability

The USGS streamgage program has been funded in a 50/50 co-operative with more than 800 state and local agencies (through the co-operative water program). Now, because of budget cuts or flat budgets for the USGS contribution to
the program, the local and state agencies have to cover more than 60 percent of the cost. State and local agencies cannot increase their contributions to make up for the federal shortfall, and the program is now losing critical streamgages that have recorded information for more than 30 years. These long-term streamgages are necessary to determine flood trends and are used by insurance agencies and neighborhood planning departments, by emergency response and flood prediction personnel, and by those measuring the effects of climate change.

The USGS operates and maintains approximately 7,500 streamgages that provide long-term, accurate information on stream flow. There has been an average of about 100 long-term streamgages lost each year since 1972, often because they are moved to a new location. A total of 2,632 streamgages with 30 or more years of streamflow records have been discontinued since 1972—a significant loss of long-term trends data. Although the support for this program has been declining over several White House Administrations, the declines under the Bush Administration have been severe and put an already strained program into critical condition.

On February 25, 2008, 34 organizations signed a letter calling for full implementation of the NSIP in FY09, which would require approximately $100 million, considerably more than the current budget request of $23.8 million. Among other supporters, the letter was signed by the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Water Works Association, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Association of State Floodplain Managers, and National Flood Determination Association. The letter was also signed by numerous recreational and environmental groups. In addition, 26 officials representing 18 states have joined this effort, endorsing a separate letter. It is clear that there is strong widespread support for the program from diverse interests.

What Should Be Done to Restore Streamflow Monitoring?
The NSIP should be completely funded. A little more than $20 million is requested in the president’s FY09 budget. A little more than $114 million is required to fully fund the program.

Monitoring Pesticides in Urban Watersheds by the EPA and State Agencies

The EPA should implement or require water quality monitoring for pesticides in urban watersheds throughout the nation. In California, water quality monitoring conducted by local agencies has documented widespread pesticide contamination, triggering pollution prevention efforts. Unfortunately, in most regions of the country neither the EPA nor state agencies have required or provided water quality monitoring for pesticides. Hazardous pesticides are used throughout the nation by homeowners and commercial exterminators, leaving urban waterways everywhere at risk.
Polluted stormwater is the largest source of contamination of waterways in most urban areas and is responsible for increased flooding, impairment of freshwater and marine ecosystems, and the closing of beaches and shellfish beds due to high bacterial levels. Insufficient monitoring was identified in a new report by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) as a key deficiency of current urban stormwater management programs. The report identifies problems such as scarcity of data, inconsistent requirements, reliance on “self monitoring” to ensure compliance, and lack of rigorous end-of-pipe monitoring as major deficiencies contributing to the degradation of water quality. It calls for an overhaul of the stormwater management regulations to include more comprehensive, sophisticated, and accurate monitoring techniques and requirements. Improvements in stormwater monitoring requirements are necessary to address the issues outlined in the NAS report and prevent the contamination of urban waterways.

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**Urban Stormwater Management by the EPA and State Agencies**

| Polluted stormwater is the largest source of contamination of waterways in most urban areas and is responsible for increased flooding, impairment of freshwater and marine ecosystems, and the closing of beaches and shellfish beds due to high bacterial levels. Insufficient monitoring was identified in a new report by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) as a key deficiency of current urban stormwater management programs. The report identifies problems such as scarcity of data, inconsistent requirements, reliance on “self monitoring” to ensure compliance, and lack of rigorous end-of-pipe monitoring as major deficiencies contributing to the degradation of water quality. It calls for an overhaul of the stormwater management regulations to include more comprehensive, sophisticated, and accurate monitoring techniques and requirements. Improvements in stormwater monitoring requirements are necessary to address the issues outlined in the NAS report and prevent the contamination of urban waterways. |

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CHAPTER 4

Food Safety Programs

Contaminants in food can cause acute illness accompanied by vomiting and diarrhea or may cause longer-term health problems such as neurological and reproductive disorders or cancer because of toxic chemical residues. Common food contaminants include bacteria and viruses that can cause food poisoning, mercury and other pollutant contamination in fish, pesticide residues, and various other chemicals. However, recent cuts to programs and budgets coupled with longstanding under-resourcing have undermined the ability of monitoring programs to identify and track threats to food safety, thereby threatening public health.

What Happened?
CDC reduced funding of programs that identify and track food safety and foodborne illness.

Why Does It Matter?
Approximately 76 million Americans are sickened by foodborne illnesses each year, resulting in an estimated 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths. Despite large-scale outbreaks of foodborne illnesses and food recalls in recent years, the funding for CDC’s food safety monitoring programs has steadily decreased. The budget for FY09 represents a 6 percent decline from the FY04 funding level (see Figure 2). This cut is especially crippling because the 2004 funding level was far from sufficient to allow rapid detection of illness outbreaks.
These budget cuts come at the same time as studies that demonstrate the United States is failing to meet public health goals for reducing foodborne illnesses. Before 2004, there were annual reductions in the incidence of foodborne illness. However, since 2004 there has been no progress in reducing infections caused by many dangerous bacteria, including *Salmonella* and *Shigella*. At the same time, *Cryptosporidium* parasitic infections have increased. The estimated cost of *Salmonella* infections alone in the United States is more than $464 million dollars. In comparison, the $2 million cost for partially rebuilding the food-related illness monitoring system is a small and worthwhile investment.

Although additional funding has been allocated to the Food and Drug Administration’s food safety programs, cuts to the CDC foodborne illness programs have simultaneously crippled another important food safety program that helps protect consumers. Adequate funding for foodborne illness monitoring is essential to detect outbreaks sooner, improve investigations, and prevent disease.

**Figure 2: CDC Food Safety Monitoring Budget**

**What Should Be Done to Restore Foodborne Illness Monitoring?**

1. Immediately restore $2 million to the CDC food safety monitoring budget.
2. Evaluate the total resources for foodborne illness surveillance and expand the program as needed.
What Happened?
The USDA eliminated the Chemical Usage Survey.30

Why Does It Matter?
This survey has been published annually by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in a publicly accessible database called the Agricultural Chemical Use Database. It provided the public, industry, and regulators with U.S. trends of pesticide use in agriculture, searchable by year, by state, and by crop.31 NASS has data on its website going back to 1990, facilitating an important long-term understanding of the changing trends in chemical use and pest management over time.

NASS's Chemical Usage Survey is the only reliable, publicly available source of data on pesticide and fertilizer use trends across the country. Eliminating the NASS program will severely hamper the efforts of the USDA, EPA, scientists, and state officials to estimate health risks from pesticides and to make informed decisions about pesticide use. The EPA and state regulators rely heavily on these data to determine how to design effective, targeted mitigation measures that will reduce pesticides where their use may lead to unsafe contamination of food and waterways or unsafe exposures to endangered wildlife species. Without these data, the USDA and the EPA will have difficulty tracking progress in meeting their policy commitments to prevent the unsafe use of hazardous pesticides through adoption of mitigation measures, including reduced use rates and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices.32

EPA managers and professional staff have voiced their strong support for the Chemical Usage Survey program, stressing the high-priority of these data for regulators. In addition, crop and chemical industry groups have also defended the program. A letter protesting budget cuts to the program was sent to the USDA in November 2007, signed by more than 30 industry trade groups. In an unusual confluence of interests, a letter voicing the same protest was sent to USDA in May 2008, from 45 public interest organizations.

The USDA claims that it must make the cuts because of budget constraints; however, EPA managers tell us that the Chemical Usage Survey program costs about $8.4 million annually—about 5 percent of the approximate annual budget of $160 million for the whole NASS program or .01 percent of the approximate annual budget of $95 billion for the USDA as a whole.33 Regulators, industry trade groups, and public interest groups have all defended the program and protested cuts to its budget. Why cut such a popular and inexpensive program? We may never know.

What Should Be Done to Track Pesticide Use?
Re-instate the program and restore the budget to at least $9 million annually or a level that will keep the program updated and relevant to all users.
Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

Additional Monitoring Required to Protect Public Health

Although some food monitoring programs have not suffered recent cutbacks, they have chronically suffered from insufficient funding, staff, and attention. Expanding these programs is also important to ensuring food safety and protecting public health.

- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Monitoring of Mercury in Fish:** Up-to-date and accurate data on mercury levels in fish are needed to guide consumers about safe fish choices. Current recommendations for many fish types are based on a small number of samples (sometimes as few as two samples) collected more than 15 years ago, and independent testing has found higher mercury levels in some fish species. The FDA’s fish monitoring should be updated to include more recent and comprehensive testing for mercury.

- **Pesticide Residue Monitoring by the USDA and the FDA:** Comprehensive testing for pesticide residues in food provides vital information to safeguard human health and prevent unsafe exposures to dangerous chemicals. The USDA and FDA are both responsible for annual testing of food items for hundreds of different pesticides. However, current testing levels do not provide adequate data for all food types and only cover an estimated 0.00004 percent of the fruits and vegetables for sale. The pesticide residue monitoring programs must be strengthened to include a more representative sample with a broader diversity of food types.

- **Monitoring and Research on Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) by the USDA:** Bees are essential to food production and are important partners in producing an estimated one out of every three mouthfuls of food we eat. They pollinate products worth $15 billion annually in the United States alone. We are already seeing the impacts of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) on food production. Monitoring honey bee colonies is crucial to understanding what contributes to the collapse of our nation’s bee colonies. However, the methodologies used by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its surveys of the beekeeping industry are designed to collect data on honey production and are not adequate to track CCD. The National Research Council has recommended that NASS improve its methods to prevent over- or undercounting of bee colonies and to collect additional data on colony health.

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\(^c\) This number is calculated based on the quantity of fruits and vegetables tested by the USDA in 2006 compared to the quantity produced and imported into the United States.

CHAPTER 5

Toxic Substance Programs

Toxic chemicals released into the environment have led to poisonings, contaminated communities, and measurable residues of toxic chemicals in the human body. Diverse environmental and health monitoring systems are essential to identify and track chemical threats before they harm people. This monitoring should encompass everything from proper accounting for pollution released from smokestacks to measuring contaminants in communities.

What Happened?
Toxic pollutant reporting requirements were relaxed, which allows industry to release larger amounts of chemicals into the environment without informing communities.

Why Does It Matter?
The EPA issued a rule in December 2006 modifying the reporting requirements for the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) program. TRI requires certain industrial facilities to report if they release any of 666 toxic chemicals or chemical categories to air, land, and water and makes the data publicly accessible over the Internet. Compared to the previous requirements, this rule allows facilities to release four times more pollution before they must provide detailed information to the public.

Previously, a facility releasing more than 500 pounds of a toxic chemical was required to file a report for that chemical—known as Form R—detailing the amount of the chemical released, where it was released (air, water, land), recycled amounts, and other waste management information. Facilities that fell below the 500-pound threshold filed Form A, which contains no information on the exact amount of the release or where it occurred. The new rule raised the reporting threshold to 2,000 pounds. Now facilities that release less than 2,000 pounds can file the uninformative Form A, provided that the total amount of the chemical in the waste doesn't exceed 5,000 pounds. (See Table 2).
The EPA rule also allows facilities that have less than 500 pounds of a persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT) chemical in their waste to file Form A for that chemical, if they have zero releases. This is the first time that the EPA has allowed the use of Form A for PBT chemicals, which include highly toxic contaminants such as lead, PCBs, and dioxin. The rule took effect for the 2006 reporting year.

An analysis of TRI data showed that certain areas with large concentrations of industrial facilities could lose information from a significant number of local polluters. For example, in Los Angeles County, California, 30 percent of facilities could stop filing at least one Form R, and data on 126,000 pounds of pollutant releases could be lost. In Jefferson County, Texas, 45 percent of facilities could stop filing at least one Form R, causing the loss of data on approximately 56,000 pounds of pollutant releases. In St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, 57 percent of facilities could switch from Form R to Form A for at least one pollutant. Data on 21,000 pounds of toxic pollutants would vanish.

This EPA rule reduces the amount of information available to individuals on chemical releases in their communities. The TRI is the most accessible and comprehensive source of data on industrial chemical releases in the United States. It provides valuable information relevant to public health. Over the years, this information has empowered community groups and state and local government agencies to successfully pressure polluters to reduce their pollution. By allowing facilities to release more contaminants before disclosing detailed TRI reports that are open to public scrutiny, this EPA rule undermines one important incentive for companies to reduce their chemical releases.

Public support for maintaining the integrity of TRI has been strong. More than 200 environmental and health groups signed a letter to the EPA opposing changes to TRI. The agency also received more than 100,000 public comments, which were overwhelmingly opposed to weakening the TRI program. Currently, the EPA rule is being challenged in court by the New York Attorney General and other states.

**What Should Be Done to Protect Communities’ Right to Know?**

The EPA should withdraw this rule and reinstate the previous 500 pound threshold for non-PBT chemicals and eliminate the use of Form A for PBT chemicals.

### Table 2: New TRI Rule Versus the Previous Rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Chemical</th>
<th>Old Rule</th>
<th>New Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-PBTs*</td>
<td>if releases of the chemical are greater than 500 pounds</td>
<td>if releases of the chemical are greater than 2,000 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBTs* (e.g., mercury, lead)</td>
<td>if the chemical is present in the waste managed, or if it is released in any amount</td>
<td>if the chemical in the waste is greater than 500 pounds, or if it is released in any amount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) chemical.

**Table 2: New TRI Rule Versus the Previous Rule**

The EPA rule also allows facilities that have less than 500 pounds of a persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT) chemical in their waste to file Form A for that chemical, if they have zero releases. This is the first time that the EPA has allowed the use of Form A for PBT chemicals, which include highly toxic contaminants such as lead, PCBs, and dioxin. The rule took effect for the 2006 reporting year.

An analysis of TRI data showed that certain areas with large concentrations of industrial facilities could lose information from a significant number of local polluters. For example, in Los Angeles County, California, 30 percent of facilities could stop filing at least one Form R, and data on 126,000 pounds of pollutant releases could be lost. In Jefferson County, Texas, 45 percent of facilities could stop filing at least one Form R, causing the loss of data on approximately 56,000 pounds of pollutant releases. In St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, 57 percent of facilities could switch from Form R to Form A for at least one pollutant. Data on 21,000 pounds of toxic pollutants would vanish.

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**Missing Data on Dangerous Chemicals in California**

In Kern County, California, 17.5 percent of children and adolescents have asthma, a rate more than 40 percent above the national average and almost 20 percent more than the rest of California. Under the new TRI reporting rule, the health professionals caring for this community would be deprived of crucial information about air pollution that could significantly impact their patients’ health. Before the new rule, TRI reporting for Kern County included the release of 270 pounds of the industrial chemical toluene di-isocyanate (TDI), a potent allergen that is known to cause asthma. For people who have become sensitized to this chemical, even tiny amounts can cause severe—even fatal—asthma attacks. Kern County is not unique; communities all over the country live next door to asthma-causing chemicals. Without TRI reporting, these communities will be in the dark about a potentially serious health threat.
Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

Program: Contaminated Sites (Superfund Program)
Agency: EPA

What Happened?
The number of site inspections and health assessments at toxic waste sites has plummeted since 1999.

Why Does It Matter?
Approximately 25 percent of Americans live within 4 miles of a Superfund toxic waste site,\textsuperscript{38} These sites are contaminated with chemicals that can cause cancer, birth defects, damage to the brain and nervous system, and other health problems. Budget cuts over the past 10 years have led to sharp declines in the inspection, assessment, and clean-up of contaminated sites. These assessments are key sources of information on the presence and dangers of toxic hazards in some of the most contaminated areas in the country.

The proposed FY09 budget reflects a 16 percent decrease in federal funding since FY02. This is significant because Congress has not reauthorized the Superfund program, and polluters have no longer been paying for hazardous waste site assessments and clean-ups. Since the polluter fund money ran out in 2003, taxpayers have been the main funding source for site assessment and clean-up.\textsuperscript{39}

What Should Be Done to Assess Contaminated Sites?
Congress should reauthorize Superfund so polluters and not taxpayers must pay for site assessment and clean-up.

![Figure 3: Monitoring at Contaminated Sites](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/cursites/)

SOURCE: CERCLIS database http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/cursites/
What Happened?
Budget cuts hamper tracking of accidents and other chemical release incidents.

Why Does It Matter?
The Hazardous Substances Emergency Event Surveillance (HSEES) System is the only means by which health outcomes from chemical accidents and other short-term releases of hazardous substances are tracked in the United States. Current funding levels allow for monitoring in only 14 states. However, even with this limited surveillance network, approximately 9,000 chemical releases that could endanger public health have been recorded per year. The victims of these events include employees, the public, students, and emergency responders. Respiratory irritation, headaches, and dizziness/central nervous system symptoms are most commonly reported. There were 69 deaths reported in 15 states from chemical releases in 2005. No reports have been publicly released since 2005.

Funding for HSEES peaked in 2004 and decreased by 9 percent in 2008 from 2004 levels. At the same time, rising costs have compounded the budget shortfall. Insufficient funds have limited the scope of the monitoring and impeded investigations that could prevent further incidents. Current funding levels do not provide sufficient resources to analyze the monitoring data, develop preventive and response measures, or conduct outreach.
An analysis of HSEES monitoring data collected through 2005 revealed that although the number of employee victims of hazardous substance releases has gone down, the number of people from the general public that have been harmed has increased, reaching the highest level in more than 10 years. In January 2005, pesticides and fertilizers released because of an agricultural warehouse fire in Yakima County, Washington, sent 55 people to the hospital, closed a section of highway, and caused the evacuation of more than 400 people within a half-mile radius for 2.5 days. Improved nationwide monitoring and investigation of chemical accidents and releases could help prevent incidents such as this.

**Figure 4: Number of Victims of Hazardous Substance Releases**

![Graph showing the number of victims of hazardous substance releases from 1993 to 2005.](source)

**What Should Be Done to Track and Prevent Hazardous Chemical Releases?**

1. Immediately restore the HSEES program budget to the 2004 level.
2. Expand the number of states participating in the HSEES program from 14 to at least 35 (which would cover approximately 90 percent of the U.S. population).
3. Strengthen integration and use of biomonitoring data.
4. Provide resources to analyze and publicly release the monitoring data.
5. Use information collected from this program to prevent chemical release incidents.
**Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration**

**Program:** Monitoring Environmental Injustices  
**Agency:** EPA

**What Happened?**
The FY09 proposed budget cuts funding to the Office of Environmental Justice’s budget by 35 percent.

**Why Does It Matter?**
Under Executive Order 12898, signed by President Clinton on February 11, 1994, the EPA is required to collect human health and environmental data to assess and compare environmental and human health risks to people of various races, national origins, and income levels. Specifically, the EPA must perform environmental justice reviews of all programs, policies, and activities. Under President Bush, the Office of Environmental Justice was ignored and then decimated. Further, the proposed FY09 budget would cut $2.5 million—35 percent—out of the already tiny office. A 2006 EPA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report found that program and regional offices have not routinely performed environmental justice reviews and that 87 percent of respondents stated that “EPA management had not requested them to perform reviews of the Agency’s programs, policies, and activities as required by the Executive Order.”

“The current administration has taken us backwards and it is millions of low-income families and citizens of color who pay the price. The EPA has refused to recognize the crystal clear evidence: your income and your skin color is a good indication of how clean your air will be when you take a breath. The EPA has failed to take action on environmental justice and rolled back many of the gains that we made during the 1990’s. Documents from the EPA administrators from 2001 and 2005 downplay the disproportionate impact of environmental problems on lower-income and minority communities.”

— Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee’s Subcommittee on Superfund and Environmental Health

**What Should Be Done to Promote Environmental Justice?**
1. Immediately restore $2.5 million in funding to the EPA Office of Environmental Justice.
2. The new EPA Administrator should comply with Executive Order 12898 and ensure that environmental justice assessments take place.
By law, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is allowed, but not required, to test the safety of consumer products sold in the United States. The commission, historically plagued by a lack of resources and lack of enforcement power, languished badly under the Bush Administration. In 2007, its budget of less than $63 million was less than half of what it would have been if it had been adjusted for inflation since CPSC was established in 1973. The staff in 2007 was less than half of the peak staffing level in 1980.\(^a\) Because President Bush did not appoint a quorum to the commission, CPSC had no power to do anything beyond voluntary product recalls for the past few years. The lead in toys crisis in 2007 sounded an alarm to Congress to overhaul and improve the commission and its statutory mandates.

CHAPTER 6

Human Health Programs

Toxic pollution in the environment, workplace, and home can harm human health and cause disease. Programs that monitor and track the health of individuals and communities provide information needed to identify public health threats and prevent future harm. From measuring toxic chemicals in the human body to understanding the patterns of diseases in a community, these programs are needed to shed light on environmental contaminants and their effect on human health.

What Happened?
Budget shortfalls have led to significant cuts in the number of participants included in the annual survey of health and disease.

Why Does It Matter?
The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is an annual survey of health status in the United States and a key component of the CDC health monitoring system. Survey information is used to track disease patterns, healthcare access, and achievement of national health goals. The data are used by policymakers, researchers, and government agencies to learn about the trends in, and causes of, important diseases and to design programs and policies that improve public health.

Because of budget constraints dating back to 2002, the number of people interviewed for the survey has been significantly reduced. From 2002 through 2005 the survey was intended to include 100,000 participants, but limited resources resulted in lower, by up to 8 percent, numbers of participants each year. In 2006, the survey was redesigned to include only 87,500 participants, but additional budget cuts to even more declines in the number of participants surveyed each year (see Figure 5). At current funding levels, the 2008 survey is projected to include only 76,000 respondents or about three-quarters of the respondents surveyed before 2002. The shrinking of the NHIS compromises its ability to represent the diversity of the United States population and reduces its capacity to inform
needed health policy and research. Specifically, these cuts may impede the collection of much needed data on racial and ethnic subgroups—information critical to increasing the understanding of health disparities.

**Figure 5: Cuts In The National Health Interview Survey**

![Graph showing cuts in the National Health Interview Survey](image)


**What Should Be Done to Track Health Conditions?**
The CDC director should fund the NHIS to enable the collection of robust and comprehensive health status information that adequately reflects the diversity of the United States.

**What Happened?**
Insufficient resources have stalled implementation of state biomonitoring programs.

**Why Does It Matter?**
Biomonitoring, which measures toxic substances in blood and urine, is an essential tool in understanding what people are exposed to and how chemicals in the environment affect health. CDC studies have detected more than 100 chemicals in people in the United States. However, most state health departments lack the capacity to conduct this important type of monitoring. States need to do biomonitoring for emergency response as well as to monitor health-related exposures over time, identify communities at risk, and assess the effectiveness of state pollution control programs. In 2001, the CDC launched an initiative to provide planning grants for 33 states to develop biomonitoring capacity. Despite the
Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

success of these grants and the overwhelming interest in developing state biomonitoring programs, presidential budget cuts have prevented the continuation of these programs.

Funding for the CDC’s biomonitoring program peaked in 2002 and decreased by 18 percent in 2008 (see Figure 6).53 At the same time, rising costs have compounded the budget shortfall.

What Should Be Done to Track Chemicals in People?
1. Immediately restore the CDC’s biomonitoring program budget to the 2002 level of more than $30 million.
2. Increase the budget by $10 million within the next year to support state biomonitoring program capacity.

![Figure 6: Reduced Funding For Biomonitoring Program](image)

Monitoring of Mercury in People Finds Higher Levels in New Yorkers

In July of 2007 the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported that a local biomonitoring survey had found higher levels of mercury in the blood of New Yorkers, compared to national numbers. Asians, people with higher income levels, and women were particularly likely to have high levels of mercury in their bodies.a Mercury damages the nervous system and is a particular risk to the developing brain of fetuses and young children. By monitoring on a local level, the survey was able to identify populations at higher risk that had been missed in national surveys. Based on these results, the NYC Department of Health has developed new educational materials and can target their efforts to reach vulnerable populations.5  Unfortunately, this type of local survey is unlikely to happen in other places unless the budget cuts to the CDC biomonitoring program are restored and funding levels increased to support state biomonitoring capacity.

Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration

There are literally thousands of chemicals being used in our everyday products in the United States in cleaning supplies, pesticides, cosmetics and more. It’s important to know more about how those chemicals are building up in our bodies or how they may be affecting our health. Bio-monitoring will do just that by shedding some light on our bodies, our environment, and on public health.”
—California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Health Monitoring Programs That Need Nationwide Expansion

Current funding levels restrict many health monitoring programs to a limited number of states. Increased resources are needed to ensure the adequacy of these programs to protect all Americans.

- **Occupational Asthma and Pesticide Illness Surveillance Programs under the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):** Monitoring of workplace illness provides essential information to design prevention strategies that keep people safe at work. Current federal funding levels only cover asthma surveillance programs in four states and pesticide illness surveillance programs in five. Additional funds are needed to enhance surveillance capacity and expand this monitoring network to provide more comprehensive coverage throughout the country.

- **National Environmental Public Health Tracking, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** Tracking exposures and health effects that may be linked to environmental hazards is key to improved understanding and prevention of many illnesses such as asthma and cancer. In 2002, the CDC launched an initiative to develop a nationwide system to link environmental and health monitoring data. However, flat funding of this program since 2003 has meant the network includes only 16 states and one city despite interest from many more states. Increased funding is required to fulfill the potential of a nationwide network that reflects the diversity of the United States.
CHAPTER 7

Recommendations for Protecting Public Health

From pollution in our environment to chemicals in our food and bodies, we rely on environmental and health monitoring programs to provide us with information on the safety of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the communities we live in. The systematic Bush Administration cutbacks documented in this report will keep us in the dark about threats to our health while at the same time making it easier to pollute because of fewer requirements to document emissions. Protecting public health requires immediate action to restore these comprehensive monitoring programs to test our environment and strong pollution reporting systems to keep contamination in check.

We need a robust environmental and health monitoring system. This should include restoration of cut programs, strengthening of existing programs and funding to monitor for new threats.

Specifically, the following areas must be addressed:

**Congress Should:**

- Reinstate the polluter-pays principle at hazardous waste sites by reauthorizing the Superfund program to ensure a consistent source of funding for assessment and clean-up.
- Restore funding for the USGS National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA), National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP), and the Toxic Substances Hydrology Program.
- Immediately restore $5 million to the budget for the CDC biomonitoring program to bring the program back to 2002 levels. The new administration should request at least an additional $10 million in the next year to allow the development of state biomonitoring program capacity.
- Fully fund the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to ensure that it is capable of fulfilling its mission and strengthen CPSC's authority to ensure adequate consumer product testing, manufacturer reporting, public disclosure, and enforcement capabilities.
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Should:

- Expand the lead air monitoring network to greater than 650 source-oriented monitors near major lead polluters across the country, with an additional 330 or more monitors in urban areas.
- Abandon the proposed rule to exempt reporting of hazardous air emissions from animal waste at farms, and require that livestock operations comply with the current reporting requirements when they release hazardous substances at levels that may jeopardize public health.
- Resume monitoring for perchlorate and MTBE in drinking water and set drinking water standards for perchlorate and MTBE. These standards must be protective of sensitive populations such as pregnant women and children.
- Repair the Toxics Release Inventory by reinstating the previous 500 pound threshold for non-PBT chemicals and eliminate the use of Form A for PBT chemicals.
- Restore at least $2.5 million in funding to its Office of Environmental Justice and ensure the completion of environmental justice assessments as required under Executive Order 12898.
- Revise stormwater management regulations and guidance to incorporate the recommendations of the NAS report for more comprehensive, sophisticated, and accurate monitoring techniques and require regular monitoring of current use pesticides in urban stormwater permits.
- Work with USGS to develop a systematic survey of pesticides in urban waterways.

The Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Should:

- Immediately restore $2 million to the budget for foodborne illness surveillance to bring the program back up to the 2004 budget level. CDC should then evaluate the program for further enhancement in light of increased threats from foodborne illness.
- Immediately restore funding for the Hazardous Substances Emergency Event Surveillance System (HSEES) to the 2004 level of $1.7 million. The program should then gradually be expanded beyond 14 states, with the goal of covering at least 35 states and 90 percent of the U.S. population.
- Provide full funding support for the National Health Information Survey to enable the collection of robust and comprehensive health status information that adequately reflects the diversity of the United States.
- Increase funding support for Environmental Public Health Tracking programs that combine exposure and disease data and enable better time-trends and geographic tracking of environmentally-related disease.
- Increase occupational asthma and occupational illness tracking programs to more states, and provide more resources to NIOSH for data analysis in these programs.

The U.S. Department Of Agriculture (USDA) Should:

- Resume the National Agricultural Statistics Service Chemical Usage Survey which tracks agricultural pesticide use.
- Fund improved tracking and research into Colony Collapse Disorder, which has been affecting honey bees nationwide.

The Food And Drug Administration (FDA) Should:

- Adopt rapid screening methods for mercury in fish and test a statistically-representative sample of all commonly-consumed fish species from each region annually.
- Increase testing for pesticide and other hazardous residues in food, with a special focus on imported food, which is more likely to be contaminated with chemicals that are illegal in the United States.
Endnotes


11. According to UCMR 1 data. Additional monitoring data released by public water systems and government and academic entities in Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, DC, reviewed by NRDC bring the total of states with public water systems affected by perchlorate to 27, and the number of water systems with perchlorate detections to 402. These water systems serve approximately 41 million people.


Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration


22 See Fig 4: http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/history1.html.


28 Ibid.


Deepest Cuts: Repairing Health Monitoring Programs Slashed Under the Bush Administration


39 Ibid.


42 Personal communication with CDC budget staff.


44 Ibid.


50 Ibid.


52 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Biomonitoring Program: State Grant Activities.

53 Personal communication with CDC budget staff.
