



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 14 2009

OFFICE OF THE  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Honorable Edolphus Towns  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am transmitting the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled Indoor Mold: Better Coordination of Research on Health Effects and More Consistent Guidance Would Improve Federal Efforts (GAO-08-980). EPA prepared this response pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 720.

EPA coordinated with GAO throughout the preparation of its study and generally agreed with GAO's recommendations in a draft version of the report.

GAO recommended that the Administrator, EPA, use the Federal Interagency Committee on Indoor Air Quality to accomplish the following two actions:

GAO Recommendation

Help articulate and guide research priorities on indoor mold across relevant federal agencies, coordinate information sharing on ongoing and planned research activities among agencies, and provide information to the public on ongoing research activities to better ensure that federal research on the health effects of exposure to indoor mold is effectively addressing research needs and efficiently using scarce federal resources.

EPA Response

EPA appreciates the GAO's in-depth review of Federal efforts with regard to inter-agency coordination of mold-related research. The Agency agrees with GAO's conclusion that the Federal Interagency Committee on Indoor Air Quality (CIAQ) is one tool to help agencies articulate and guide research priorities on indoor mold.

EPA will list mold research as a topic on the CIAQ agenda at the February 2009 meeting. Also, beginning in calendar year 2009, EPA will schedule a CIAQ review of inter-agency mold research priorities as a discussion/action topic in at least one of its three annual meetings. EPA also will lead the CIAQ in considering how best to use available information-sharing tools and technologies in order to meet the intent of this recommendation within the resources available to the Committee.

#### GAO Recommendation

Help relevant agencies review their existing guidance to the public on indoor mold – considering the audience and purpose of the guidance documents – to better ensure that it sufficiently alerts the public, especially vulnerable populations, about the potential adverse health effects of exposure to indoor mold and educates them on how to minimize exposure in homes. The reviews should take into account the best available information and ensure that the guidance does not conflict among agencies.

#### EPA Response

EPA agrees with the GAO's recommendation that the CIAQ assist the relevant Federal agencies in reviewing mold-related guidance to the public. As a starting point, EPA will place this topic on the CIAQ agenda for discussion at its February 2009 meeting. EPA will solicit the views of the member agencies on how best to accomplish and sustain such a role within the resources available to the Committee. Beginning in calendar year 2009, EPA also will include Federal mold guidance as a discussion/action topic in one of its three annual meetings.

These actions build upon the work that was done in 2005 in coordinating the efforts of federal agencies to address indoor mold in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. EPA assessed the lessons learned from these experiences and incorporated important messages into our outreach documents, low literacy publications, website, public service announcements and other materials. EPA worked in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to share the results of what we learned on flood response, mold, and related issues with other Federal, State and local environmental and public health officials.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report's recommendations. The Agency recognizes the importance of working with other federal agencies regarding ongoing research on the health effects of exposure to indoor mold and providing information to the public on potential health effects and how to minimize exposure in homes.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Jim  
Blizzard in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-  
1695.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lyons Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "G".

Lyons Gray  
Chief Financial Officer