

On the road to improvement: EPA's troubled program on chemical hazards

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Out of the thousands of chemicals used for countless everyday products, about 500 have been assessed for potential health risks by the federal program tasked with this colossal duty. The good news is the Environmental Protection Agency, which runs the program, has improved it, but more remains to be done, according to a report from the National Research Council (NRC). *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly news magazine of the American Chemical Society, hits the report's highlights.

Cheryl Hogue, senior correspondent for C&EN, explains that the EPA program, called Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), has been the target of criticism from multiple sides. Democrats and the Government Accountability Office have taken it to task for failing to complete assessments in a timely way. Some Republicans have faulted IRIS for lacking scientific credibility. In 2011, the NRC called for major reforms and followed up with a new congressional-requested report this May.

Although some changes have been made, the NRC makes additional recommendations for further improvements, the C&EN article notes. Among the suggestions are the following: The EPA should check for "risk of bias" in the scientific studies the agency uses to assess a [chemical](#)'s potential hazards, and the agency should provide technical assistance to public interest and community groups that would like to comment on draft assessments but don't have the scientific or financial resources to do so. The question remains, will the agency receive the funding required to put these practices into place?

More information: "EPA's Efforts Endorsed"
[cen.acs.org/articles/92/i20/EP ... fforts-Endorsed.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/92/i20/EP...fforts-Endorsed.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

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