

# EPA's IRIS program has made substantial progress, says new report

April 11 2018

---

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) program has made "substantial progress" in implementing recommendations outlined in past reports by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, improving the program's overall scientific and technical performance, says a [new Academies report](#). The program, which is used to assess the hazards posed by environmental contaminants, remains a work in progress and should continue to evolve as it adapts and applies new scientific practices and knowledge, the report says.

The transformation of the IRIS [process](#) began several years ago after the release of a [2011 Academies report](#) that provided suggestions for creating a more systematic and transparent IRIS process. In a [2014 report](#), the Academies reviewed the changes implemented in the [program](#) since 2011 and concluded that the improvements were considerable. Under the program's new leadership, EPA asked the National Academies to review again the agency's progress toward addressing past recommendations.

The Academies' latest review finds that IRIS has made substantial progress in incorporating systematic-review methods into its process and assessments. IRIS has also established a systematic-review working group and engaged subject-matter experts. According to the new [report](#), these groups should increase efficiency and consistency among assessments and improve the scientific rigor of the assessments.

"The changes in the IRIS program over such a short period of time are impressive," said Jonathan Samet, dean of the Colorado School of Public Health and chair of the committee that wrote the report. "We see a substantial commitment at EPA to use systematic-review methods in conducting assessments, which are important for identifying, evaluating, and summarizing the findings from current literature and integrating the evidence available to inform decisions."

The committee also said the program has developed a number of collaborations with such groups as the World Health Organization, the National Toxicology Program Office of Health Assessment and Translation, and the European Food Safety Authority that will help position the IRIS program as a leader in advancing systematic-review methods.

The report offers recommendations for some refinements and further development in different stages of its systematic-review process and risk quantification process and urges EPA to give high priority to completion, peer review, and release of its IRIS handbook, which is expected to provide critical guidance for the development of IRIS assessments. The committee noted, however, that EPA is describing its approach in IRIS protocols, and this practice provides transparency while the handbook is being completed.

Provided by National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and  
Medicine

Citation: EPA's IRIS program has made substantial progress, says new report (2018, April 11)  
retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-epa-iris-substantial.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.