



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this review to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had a method for prioritizing cleanup of the approximately 50 abandoned uranium mine (AUM) sites on or near Navajo Nation lands covered under a special account established in 2015 totaling approximately \$1 billion; and whether the EPA has a resource allocation methodology for the special account funds that accounts for estimated cleanup cost, timeframe for cleanup, and scope of cleanup for the 50 sites.

Health effects from uranium exposure can include impacts to autoimmune and reproductive functions, high blood pressure, kidney or lung damage, and bone cancer.

This report addresses the following:

- *Cleaning up and revitalizing land.*

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EPA Needs to Finish Prioritization and Resource Allocation Methodologies for Abandoned Uranium Mine Sites on or Near Navajo Lands

What We Found

The EPA has taken steps to develop a prioritization methodology for cleaning up AUM sites on or near Navajo Nation lands that are part of a 2015 settlement with a chemical company, Tronox Incorporated. In conjunction with Tronox AUM cleanup stakeholders, the EPA has developed a system for identifying immediate risks and, where necessary, has taken the removal actions needed. The EPA has been following the National Contingency Plan for assigning risk to the sites and is gathering the data needed to complete prioritization for all Tronox AUM sites covered by the settlement. The EPA is tracking the estimated cleanup costs, timeframe for cleanup, and scope of cleanup for some of the Tronox AUM sites where work has already been conducted. After the prioritization methodology is developed, the EPA will be able to develop a resource allocation methodology for the Tronox AUM sites based on estimated cleanup costs, timeframe for cleanup and scope of cleanup.

Site prioritization will aid EPA-initiated actions where there is imminent danger at numerous sites in the same area.

Regions 6 and 9 have agreed on a timeline to complete the key activities necessary to finalize their prioritization methodology. It is critical that the EPA meet its milestones, including by the end of calendar year 2020, that EPA finalize the prioritization of Tronox AUM sites. Also, by the end of calendar year 2021, the EPA has agreed to complete development and implementation of the resource allocation methodology following the cost analysis of the preferred remedies. The regions' efforts will help result in the effective use of the Tronox special account and will help provide continued protection of human health and the environment.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Region 6 and 9 Regional Administrators complete the necessary removal site evaluations and engineering evaluations/cost analyses; and fully develop and implement prioritization and resource allocation methodologies for the Tronox AUM sites on or near Navajo Nation lands. The agency agreed with the recommendations and corrective actions are pending.