

EPA Office of Inspector General Issues Second Toxaphene Analysis Report

The EPA Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued the second report concerning toxaphene analysis and the National implications of the issues brought forth in our complaint about EPA activities at the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund site. The OIG has recommended that the EPA formally adopt on a national basis an analytical method that can definitively identify toxaphene that is a threat to human health and the environment. The analytical method the OIG is advocating is called Gas Chromatography with Negative Ion Mass Spectroscopy, or NIMS. Toxaphene is a complex mixture of over 670 chemicals formed by chlorinating camphene, which was extracted from pine stumps and chlorinated at the Hercules Plant.

The OIG noted that exposure and risk information is needed to complete risk assessments, as studies indicate that toxaphene poses a risk to human health. Toxaphene products can be detected in human blood, urine, breast milk, and body tissues. Particular concern was expressed about several toxaphene chemicals that bio-accumulate in the body and babies being exposed through breast milk. Toxaphene generally gets into the body through eating contaminated fish, but air and soil exposure can be significant.