

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

We write to request an updated report on actions the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can and should take to manage risks from the effects of climate change.

In 2019, GAO released a report concluding Superfund sites across the country are severely underprepared to weather the exacerbating threat of climate change.¹ GAO found that roughly 60% of Superfund sites across the nation face increased risks from flooding, storm surge, rising sea level, and wildfires. In 2021, GAO released a follow-up report that supported its initial findings.²

There is an increasing need to continue evaluating the impacts of extreme weather events on Superfund sites. In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused flooding at 13 Superfund sites and breaches at two others.³ A year later, a California wildfire burned through the Iron Mountain Mine site, causing pipes to catch fire and nearly leading to an explosion that would have released dangerous chemicals into the neighboring communities.⁴ Furthermore, recent extreme climate events, including Hurricane Helene in 2024 and the fires in California earlier this year, have been more frequent and severe.⁵ In 2022, scientists from the EPA's Center for Environmental Measurement and Modeling (CEMM) found that out of 1330 Superfund sites in the US, over three hundred are in danger of flooding.⁶

During the Biden Administration, the EPA took multiple steps to address climate mitigation in Superfund sites. In June 2021, the EPA's Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation issued a memorandum recommending the following approach for EPA regions to consider when evaluating climate resilience during the remedy selection and implementation process.⁷ A year later, the EPA updated its program policy for the hazardous waste Superfund

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-73>

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-555t>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/archive/epa/newsreleases/status-superfund-sites-areas-affected-harvey.html>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/climate-adaptation-profile-iron-mountain-mine>

⁵ https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

⁶ https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_Report.cfm?LAB=CEMM&dirEntryID=354071#:~:text=Superfund%20sites%20represent%20some%20of,these%20sites%20at%20additional%20risk.

⁷ <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/epas-2024-2027-climate-adaptation-plan-508-compliant.pdf>

Program by releasing Green Remediation Best Management Practices.⁸ The agency also released its Climate Adaptation Plan for 2024-2027.⁹

Given the multitude of policy and administrative changes at the EPA since the beginning of the year, we would like GAO to reexamine the current and future impacts of climate change on Superfund sites. We encourage GAO to include any recommendations to continue addressing the growing risks at Superfund sites.

We also request that the report consider the impacts of recent funding and federal workforce cuts to the EPA. Although it is currently unclear how many employees have been placed on administrative leave, fired, reassigned, or have taken the Trump Administration's deferred resignation program, there is no doubt that this reduction in force will impact EPA headquarters and regional offices' ability to properly monitor and support Superfund sites.

Sincerely,



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Sydney Kamlager Dove
Member of Congress

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*