



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460**

DEC 15, 2000

**OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Dr. Morton Lippmann
Interim Chair, Executive Committee
Science Advisory Board (1400A)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Dr. Lippmann:

This letter is in response to your letter dated September 29, 2000, regarding the Science Advisory Board's (SAB) report on the Draft Strategic Plan for the Analysis of National Human Exposure Assessment Survey (NHEXAS) Pilot Study Data (EPA-SAB-IHEC-00-018), September 2000. This letter is also being sent to Dr. Morton Lippmann, Interim Chair, Science Advisory Board. The Integrated Human Exposure Committee (IHEC) of the SAB has done an excellent job in assisting us in moving our programs forward. In this case, the committee reviewed our Strategic Plan for the analysis of the extensive data produced by the NHEXAS and provided good feedback and suggestions for improvement. NHEXAS is a first-of-its-kind study of multimedia, multi-pathway exposure of about 600 people to a suite of pollutants, including pesticides, metals, and volatile organic compounds. We measured the air the subjects breathed, the food they ate, the fluids they drank, and the surfaces they contacted; in addition, we looked for chemicals in their blood and urine.

Because of the high value of this extensive study, the IHEC requested a review of its status in 1998, at which time they strongly recommended that 1) ORD develop a strategy for the analysis of NHEXAS; 2) that the Agency provide funds for these high priority analyses; and 3) that ORD follow-up with a larger national exposure survey. In order to respond to these recommendations, we created an expanded analysis program that has \$1.2M in FY01, and we are participating with the Department of Health and Human Services in developing a coordinated federal strategy for human exposure (also recommended by the General Accounting Office). We convened a workshop of experts in exposure science, risk policy, and risk management policy who came from several Federal and State agencies, EPA Regions, EPA Program Offices, the Laboratories and Centers of ORD, academia, industry, and environmental groups. These experts provided input about the type of NHEXAS analysis projects that would be most useful. From this input, ORD exposure experts (from the National Exposure Research Laboratory and the National Center of Environmental Assessment) developed a prioritized Strategic Plan that was the subject of this most recent IHEC review.

The IHEC lauded the draft Strategy, offering comments such as: “The Committee agreed that EPA had done a very good job developing and presenting the NHEXAS data analysis strategy.”; “ the Committee concurred that the NHEXAS strategic plan represented a remarkable effort...”; and “...prioritization of projects within given topic areas was carefully thought out and well executed, and that it provided valuable information for use when deciding how best to allocate limited resources.” They did make a number of specific and useful recommendations that offer excellent guidance in revising the Strategy. The major revisions include: (1) improving the clarity of some sections (e.g., some comments are on issues that are addressed within the draft but obviously are not clear enough, such as using the data in risk assessments and avoiding redundancy with completed analyses); and (2) providing an estimate of the resources needed for each project. Other recommendations will be addressed as we implement the Strategy. For example IHEC urged (1) prioritization across the topic areas in the Strategy, which will be accomplished as resources are allocated, and (2) inclusion of a wide variety of researchers, which will occur as we offer competitive assistance agreements when the database is publically available. In addition, the IHEC reemphasized the requirement that the publically available database be of the highest possible quality. We agree and are avhieving this goal through peer review of the database structure and careful independent checking of the data and related information delivered by the Principal Investigators. IHEC recommended that we develop a “five-to-seven year operational plan,” realizing that it will need to be refined periodically. We are in the process of developing such a plan with a focus on the next three years. In order to address IHEC’s recommendations for better communication of the information in the database and stimulation of coordinated analyses outside EPA’s framework, we are developing a web site that, among other things, will serve as a clearinghouse for information on an ongoing analyses as well as completed evaluations and publications.

Our scientists have revised the Strategy, and it will be publically available soon. They are also creating an operational plan, to be completed by March. We wish to acknowledge the value of this interaction between ORD and the SAB. The early IHEC advice set us on a path to achieve greater utilization of the NHEXAS data, and the current review has increased the quality of that effort. Furthermore, at the meeting, the IHEC offered to provide continuing advice as we move forward to develop future NHEXAS-type surveys.

Thank you again for your insightful advice.

Sincerely,

/ S /

Norine E. Noonan, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator

cc: Carol M. Browner
Michael W. McCabe
Larry Cupitt
Donald G. Barnes

Robert A. Flaak
Gary J. Foley
William H. Farland
Tim E. Oppelt
Henry L. Longest II
Linda Sheldon