UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NATONAL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cassidy:

Thank you for your October 24, 2017, letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) Program and its Toxicological Review of Chloroprene.

The EPA's IRIS Program informs decisions under a number of statutes, including the Comprehensive Environmental Recovery, Compensation, and Liability Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). IRIS evaluations are the top-tier source of toxicity information used by the EPA and other federal and state environmental and health agencies to inform national standards, identify clean-up levels at local sites, and set advisory levels. IRIS is the only federal program that provides quantitative values for both cancer and noncancer health effects.

The EPA is committed to ensuring that the IRIS Program provides high-quality, health-based assessments that adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity, and that are both transparent and timely. As you note, the IRIS Program has received recommendations from the National Research Council, Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the Science Advisory Board (SAB). These recommendations have had an impact. Previous reports to Congress have described the progress the IRIS Program has made. Consistent with these efforts, the 2017 GAO High Risk report noted improvement in their high risk criteria ratings specific to the IRIS Program as well. Along with these efforts, the EPA has requested that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) convene a public workshop and independently review the progress of the IRIS Program in implementing the 2014 NAS recommendations. The NAS will convene a committee in fiscal year 2018, and issue a consensus report within six months. Through our past and continuing actions to improve the IRIS Program, we are ensuring that the foundation for Agency decisions to protect human health remains based on the best available science.

Your concerns regarding the IRIS Toxicological Review of Chloroprene are under consideration. This assessment was developed using publicly available peer-reviewed literature while adhering to the rigorous standards of IRIS, including public comment, and extensive review by experts within the EPA, from other Federal agencies and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and by a panel of independent expert peer reviewers. As you are aware, we recently met with Denka Performance Elastomer's representatives and are currently reviewing their Request for Correction (RFC), including their interpretation of available studies, including the Marsh et al. study, and the Louisiana Tumor Registry data, following all processes and procedures as specified by the Information Quality Act. In addition, the RFC process is closely monitored by OMB.

Again, thank you for your letter and your continued interest in the IRIS Program. If you have further questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Christina Moody in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at moody.christina@epa.gov or 202-564-0260.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, Ph.D.
Principal Deputy Assistant
Administrator for Science