



OCSP CLIMATE ASSESSMENT SELECTED COMMENTS March 2022

What makes you feel good about your work and your workplace?

- “Absolutely nothing!!”
- “...work has been dysfunctional, stressful, and hostile. There is virtually nothing good about this environment.”
- “Not much. OPPT is chaos. Most staff believe that they are not protecting the public and decisions favor industry instead.”
- “I am so exhausted and worn out due to the harsh environment.”
- “Very little in the New Chemicals Division.”

What is impeding your ability to get work done? (Process, people, systems, other)?

- “There is also the continuation of the previous administration policies that don't pursue our mission to protect the environment and human health. Current upper management is not reversing course back to our mission.”
- “...scientific ethical issues that come from 2-3 managers being capable of overruling staff and having the final say on all of the risk assessments...”
- “The hostile and dysfunctional environment... We no longer feel safe to have scientific deliberations. We are paranoid and distrustful of each other...”
- “I have been repeatedly bullied ...being trained to remove hazards from reports, manipulate calculations, and support bad science... The EPA has done very little to hold these managers accountable.”
- “Political interference - when EPA changes direction or flip flops on cases without staff or program-manager level input.”
- “Managers who put political or cost to the industry before the science is making decisions on policy and application of policy. Managers who don't understand the science and are not willing to listen to the technical experts. Managers from the Branch Chief level up to the AA level force technical experts to do unethical or illegal things and block scientific information from being released if it says something they don't like.”
- “Bad upper management undermines, humiliates, and de-incentivizes staff...”
- “Processes are not well documented, training is inadequate, there is insufficient staff... Every case feels like a "hot potato" where you just try to get it off your plate as soon as possible so you're not holding the ball when the timer buzzes... The systems are set up to reward speed over accuracy, and deference to authority rather than deference to the facts... constant "rank-pulling" by senior leaders means that arguments aren't being judged based on the merits but the identity of the speaker.”
- “It's just a factory-line assembly process and not focused on good science and not protecting human health and the environment... The managers are combative, retaliatory, mean, and do not follow scientific integrity. They just want to control employees and retaliate against employees who offer differing technical viewpoints on work.”
- “Managers intimidating staff to change the science ...to favor industry.”
- “...we can't write SOPs because we might forget a reference that the American Chemistry Council might have wanted to be included and if they ask for us to include a reference

that we didn't at the start then the whole thing has to be thrown out and we have to perform a sacrifice to redeem ourselves in the eyes of some unknown god."

- "[redacted manager] doesn't have actual expertise in risk assessment, doesn't understand the science, and cannot lead effectively."
- "Management that micromanages and interferes with staff risk assessments. Assessments were put through multiple rounds of review with the sole purpose of eroding risk findings. The results in several cases were not supported by basic scientific principles."
- "The focus on the number of completed cases, as opposed to the quality of the work or being protective, is also a major impediment."

What are the most critical things that need to be addressed to improve your organization?

NOTE: Please indicate if your suggestion relates to a specific level or generically to OCSPP

- "Office and Senior Leadership should be fighting for a return to our mission and support the staff over angry industry lobbyists."
- "SES leadership that embraces our AA's vision and promotes a kinder workplace."
- "...the work atmosphere in RAB has become somewhat toxic... There are also bad power dynamics when it comes to differing scientific opinions since they often have power over the staff they are disagreeing with. Ideally, there should be more people capable of doing the second line "management" review and they should be out of the chain of command of the staff health assessors. There should be some mechanism for handling DSOs beyond the current system of "what management says, goes."
- "...they should care less about the deadlines and allow us to focus on the actual mission, which is protecting human health and the environment and not simply completing as many chemical reviews as possible."
- "There is a systemic problem. I think holding the perpetrators responsible for committing these scientific integrity violations and fraud will help improve the organization."
- "There needs to be actual repercussions when individuals create a toxic work environment, and more tools to equip staff to call out unacceptable workplace behavior."
- "Certain Branch Chiefs and higher-level managers need to be removed."
- "...several world-class experts have left OPPT to avoid being required to follow unlawful directions or face disciplinary actions... Branch Chiefs and higher-level managers should not be allowed to use their authority to block science they do not like... OPPT pays only lip service to scientific integrity. There is no negative effect for a manager at the Branch Chief or ADD or DD level violating the Agency or White House scientific integrity policy. On the contrary mid and higher-level management actively violate it and are rewarded for doing so. It is clear to staff that they will never see a manager removed or disciplined for anything. The staff knows that their only recourse, when confronted with unethical or illegal actions by management, is to leave."
- "This whole beat them until morale improves ideology is not working."
- "fear of how office managers will react to staff recommendations; and at the senior leadership level - lack of strong representation and support when interacting with external stakeholders."
- "It's also important to incorporate the knowledge and experience of the staff scientists and Program Managers (risk management) into the cases and they should not feel intimidated or scared to speak out of fear of retaliatory comments and behavior or fear of

being yelled at or fear of being publicly outsmarted/argued against...The risk assessors won't even speak in conference calls or meetings with companies since they are too afraid and I'm tired of it...Stop being so focused on getting cases done in 90 days and the bean-counting. Focus on getting high-quality results and high-quality deliverables. [Redacted manager name] should stop reviewing and re-editing the human health reports.”

- “New managers need to be brought in for OPPT without ties to the industry.”
- “...a sincere look needs to be taken by our AA to decide if the desire is to preserve the current supervisors, in which case they need formal supervisory training, or if they need to be replaced...staff feedback is ignored to the point of hilarity...Why leave an office to drown and then punish them for drowning?”
- “Make sure that any hostile and disruptive behavior is not tolerated.”
- “Retaliation, intimidation, lack of transparency, improper alterations of assessments without staff knowledge.”

What would be the most helpful actions that could be taken to improve the New Chemicals Division? NOTE: Please indicate if your suggestion relates to a specific level or generically to OCSPP.

- “[Redacted] creates an incredibly toxic work environment.”
- “That management and senior leadership stop allowing the rest of us to be bullied. Hold [redacted] accountable for [redacted] countless examples of unprofessional conduct.”
- [Redacted] are the worse perpetrators of these scientific integrity violations and fraud. [Redacted] and [redacted] have been complicit in these crimes against humanity. [Redacted] also committed these crimes but left the Agency. Hire competent Ph.D. toxicologists to rebuild the program. The new hires are being wrongfully trained and need to be retrained or also fired if they continue these fraudulent acts.”
- “Replace managers who do not know the science and the policies with ethical people who understand the technical and policy aspects of the New Chemical Program...This will only happen when abusive, unethical, ignorant managers are replaced.”
- “Mean managers need to be gone, specifically [redacted] needs to go...[redacted] would throw us all under the bus.”
- “We need an investigation of alleged violations of the scientific integrity policy and corrective actions to be taken. These corrective actions should include accountability for those who violated the policy and a revisitation of any decisions or Agency actions that may have been taken incorrectly. At all levels, we need bullying and intimidation to stop and to foster a workplace with cooperation and trust.”
- “Agency should remove the list of these corruptive people from the current position including [redacted].”
- “The program is broken. Hire the resources needed to get the work done. I am now embarrassed to be a part of this organization and feel my professional integrity is at stake.”
- “We need to be more transparent with the public...The high level of stress is affecting our well-being and is sickening people.”
- “Managers need to be held accountable for their retaliation against staff who have been working to support the Agency's mission. Staff should be rewarded for making safety findings rather than just for greenlighting the greatest number of chemicals.”

What is your greatest hope going forward?

- “That I find a new job as soon as possible.”
- “I would also like to be publicly recognized for the work I and others have done to bring to light these ongoing scientific integrity violations and deception to the American people. If the New Chemicals Division is failing, the ECRAD will always be overwhelmed by an endless backlog of chemicals that need to undergo systematic review.”
- “That OPPT staff can function in a safe work environment free from harassment to become a high-performing organization and become subject matter experts in their fields to give EPA some credibility and regain public trust in our decisions. - from a former OPPT staff member.”
- “Concrete changes will be made to protect staff from working in a hostile environment.”
- “That the PMN program will be based on science and not policy-based outcomes influenced by industry.”
- “I want to have a safe working place without being bullied, discriminated against, feared, and disgraceful (sic).”
- “I hope we stop immediately caving to industry pressure on every single issue instead of trusting in our science and following the law. I hope that this not-anonymous survey does not result in retaliation against me.”
- “To get out of the organization. Willing to take a lateral or move to a different agency to escape this broken organization.”
- “That I no longer have to fear that management interference could result in a decision or assessment that I worked on/contributed to harming human health and the environment.”

(From live interviews) How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “In risk assessment there is a hostile culture. The staff has been told to leave the room when they expressed a scientific opinion which was contrary to management.”
- “Almost everyone who has disagreed with management has been reprimanded and received poor performance reviews.”
- “There is a lack of transparency.”
- “Suggested changes to improve the division have been manipulated to make managers look good.”

(From live interviews) What changes would you like to see to improve the division? What aspects of the culture in the division should not be changed?

- “Need a new management team.”

(From live interviews) What would be the most helpful actions that could be taken to improve the New Chemicals Division at the Branch Level and the Division Level?

- “Assessors were put in a tough position. The person reviewing exerted intense pressure to change things. And if the scientist refused, there was retaliation against the staff in their PARS review.”
- “When communicating across organizations, employees were chastised.”

- “Want more empowerment and respect for decisions.”
- “Hold the perpetrators of the hostile environment accountable and put them on administrative leave.”

(From live interviews) What is the most important next step?

- “Highlight the accomplishments and decisions to remove chemicals from use or mitigate exposures rather than only the number of chemicals approved. Measure impact, not beans!”
- “Sincere acknowledgment that there is an issue of waste, fraud, and abuse. Hold transgressors accountable and communicate the actions taken.”
- “Appreciate listening sessions but need to recognize those in the risk assessment arena have been through the wringer resulting in no trust.”
- “Stop the retaliation.”
- “Something needs to come out of the Climate Assessment. It is demoralizing when nothing happens.”

(From individual, one-on-one interviews)

INTERVIEW #1

What do you appreciate most about working in the New Chemicals Division?

- “After Lautenberg, the Risk Assessors were stressed out and mean.”
- “Lautenberg didn’t change the way we did things.”
- “There was pressure to get things done in 90 days and look for creative ways to address the backlog. It caused stress.”

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “Reworking of reports.”
- “The assessments are not deep dives or research projects. They are at the screening level.”
- “When I made a negative outcome from the Human Health technical data and reports, I was bullied. Companies demanded meetings with the AA and above. Learned from another that after a meeting with the [redacted], the outcome was changed to no risk.”
- “Hair on Fire Requests. How do we give the companies what they needed so there would be no likely finding of risk? We were pressured to find ways to grease the wheel.”
- “[Redacted] blocks communication between the Risk Assessors and the Risk Managers. [Redacted] told the Risk Managers to stop contacting Risk Assessors and Human Health Assessors.”
- “Companies had control of the regulatory outcome. EPA lost control of the regulatory outcome.”
- “Pre notice program in Risk Management was compromised by a [redacted]. That manager limits attendance on conference calls with the companies.”
- “[Redacted] was accused of changing reports to “no risk.””

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “On the conference calls with companies, the Risk Assessors are afraid to talk when [redacted] is there. They complained that [redacted] was putting the Human Health assessors on the spot. There is a fear of retaliation on the PARS or in biweeklies.”
- “The scoping meetings originally were attended only by staff. After the reorganization, [redacted] started attending. The staff was uncomfortable with [redacted] attendance. It contributed to the atmosphere of fear.”

What changes would you like to see to improve the division? What aspects of the culture in the division should not be changed?

- “[Redacted] is very hostile and makes false complaints about the Risk Assessors. Branch and Division leadership side with [redacted] and ‘come after’ the Risk Assessors. [Redacted] know there is a pattern of lying with [redacted].”
- “Restore people taken out of their jobs in both the Risk Assessment and Risk Management Branches.”
- “Separate scientific disagreements from PARS.”

INTERVIEW #2

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “Since the reorganization, the whole division is not a team. Before you could go to the assessors and ask questions and get things taken care of. Now people are rude and unprofessional.”
- “Disrespectful political DAAs. A Branch Chief said, “Fire me over it.” “I can arrange that,” said the DAA.”
- “The Risk Managers cannot talk to the Risk Assessors. This situation existed before the reorganization.”
- “People are leaving. There are resource issues and scientific integrity issues.”
- “There are backlogged cases from 2016 with a solution. They can’t move forward because the Human Health Assessments need to be updated.”
- “People are fearful of [redacted].”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “Nothing positive.”
- “Oppressive.”
- “Extreme pressure by all levels of management up to the OPPT IO.”
- “The ever-changing policies make it difficult to manage with submitters.”

INTERVIEW #3

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “People are made to cry regularly.”
- “Pressure to get things done. Got worst with Trump and the new TSCA.”

- “All authority was taken away from Branch Chiefs and Division Directors. Everything was managed at the Office Director level.”
- “There was no trust.”
- “[Redacted] reviews every document. [Redacted] can be very hostile.”
- “[Redacted] creates a sense of fear in the organization. [Redacted] sends emails at midnight and expects a response first thing the next morning. [Redacted] is responsible for the culture of fear. When [redacted] was [redacted], [redacted] was uncooperative and very difficult.”
- “[Redacted] made some questionable personnel decisions. [Redacted] forced [redacted] to retire. [Redacted] stripped [redacted] duties. [Redacted] kicked a rule writer off a rule.”
- “[Redacted] still doesn’t know the substance of [redacted] position. [Redacted] “freaks out” and makes difficult demands on [redacted] staff.”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “[Redacted] would have us meet with at 8 am every day to ask the number of PMMs done since the day before. Things are still bad.”
- “[Redacted] is bossing people around. [Redacted] doesn’t know the work and lacks leadership skills and is hostile.”
- “The managers perpetuate a culture of fear.”

What changes would you like to see to improve the division? What aspects of the culture in the division should not be changed?

- “There was very little participation in one of the listening sessions because [redacted] buddy was logged on to spy.”
- “People have been disappointed with the new administration that there have been no management changes.”
- “The culture will not approve as long as the current managers are protected and in place.”

What would be the most helpful actions that could be taken to improve the New Chemicals Division at the: ~ Branch Level ~ Division Level

- “[Redacted] needs to go. [Redacted] altered the science using a different analog.”
- “NCD was a wonderful place to be. They are having a hard time recruiting because of the managers, not the nature of the work.”

INTERVIEW #4

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “For years, the New Chemical program had been neglected before the new TSCA amendments. It lacked proper staffing and management structure.”
- “The infrastructure is insufficient. Weak IT infrastructure and databases.”
- “Did not keep up pace with the science through the years.”
- “The last 2 years were very demoralizing for the staff. The Administration was very aggressive about cutting the budget and people.”
- “In addition to the lack of resources and deficient IT infrastructure, [redacted] has presented a very challenging situation.

An ineffective leader.
No understanding of the Risk Assessment process.
No clue about the science portfolio.
Cannot manage a science organization
Demonstrates manipulative behaviors affecting the morale of the staff.
Creates a hostile work environment with a total lack of trust across the team.
Pits people against each other.
Works behind supervisors' backs.
Comfortable with the Risk Management branches but not the 3 science branches.
Has a problem accepting other perspectives.
Does not like to be challenged in front of others”

- “[Redacted] had a division retreat in January where we developed a Strategic Plan for the division including core values, behaviors, and goals. It was never implemented.”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “Trust issue in the management team creates a hostile environment.”
- “People don’t want to touch other people’s assessments because of fear. This fear has been stalling the productivity of the program since the summer.”
- “The quality of the assessments is a problem.”
- “[Redacted] puts the Human Health team on the spot in meetings because [redacted] doesn’t understand the issues. Many areas of tension. And poor communication with the management team.”

INTERVIEW #6

What do you appreciate most about working in the New Chemicals Division?

- “Disposition Meetings with management are hostile and scientists were openly disparaged by [redacted].”
- “[Redacted] pushes cases through and makes the hazards “go away.” [Redacted] will make calls on the hazards without full knowledge of the different assays. If [redacted] is questioned, [redacted] is likely to retaliate against the person who asked the questions.”
- “A “win” for NCD is to get the chemical into commerce. Staff and managers are rewarded and praised for making the hazards “go away.””
- “Inexperienced staff and inexpert staff are making calls outside their disciplines and making decisions that should not be made.”
- “[Redacted] obstructs scientists using existing processes, e.g., the QA/QC process. [Redacted] is stealthy in applying pressure to get the change that [redacted] wants by calling scientists directly.”

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “Retaliation from supervisor in performance reviews, not often asked to participate in professional development activities for training new scientists.”
- The interviewee became physically ill from the stress in NCD.
- “[Redacted] through assessments after changing them without telling the scientist responsible for the hazard assessment. Now, [redacted] is changing the exposure assessments.”

- “[Redacted] asked for a button to bypass the QA/QC protocol and the proper risk assessment protocol.”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “No trust.”
- Management has requested that staff file a complaint against the interviewee.
- The interviewee has been told to stop talking in meetings on several occasions.

What is the most important next step?

- “The Agency needs to uphold scientific integrity and transgressors must have consequences for their actions. “
- “Need more competent management so we don’t feel afraid to come to work.”
- “Rewarded for turn-over of cases...Not rewarded for safety findings.”

INTERVIEW #7

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “Get work done fast, not right.”
- “Need to do our job and protect human health, rather than push things out the door.”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “Obey orders, do the work, don’t make waves, placate the chemical companies, do it fast, do it faster.”
- “Pats on the back only for following orders without whining.”

What is the most important next step?

- “Need managers to behave ethically and trust the rank and file”

INTERVIEW #8

What challenges are you facing in getting your work done?

- “Short turnaround times and interference from above.”
- “Other peers or colleagues called in to take over an assessment. Not informed by management.”

How would you describe the culture of the New Chemicals Division?

- “Toxic”
- “[Redacted] pushes very hard and overrides people.”
- “Not allowed to discuss openly and disagree on scientific issues.”

INTERVIEW #9

What changes would you like to see to improve the division? What aspects of the culture in the division should not be changed?

- “Approvals should be by scientists, not the branch chief.”
- “Managers only care about meeting deadlines. PARS is about numbers.”

