

California Environmental Protection Agency

Investigations of Improper Activities by State Employees, January 2008 Through June 2008

INVESTIGATION I2008-0678 (REPORT I2008-2), OCTOBER 2008

California Environmental Protection Agency's response as of September 2008

An employee of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) failed to promptly submit time sheets that accurately reported her absences from work during the period August 2006 through June 2008. In addition, the officials responsible for managing her daily activities and for monitoring her time and attendance did not ensure that the employee documented her absences correctly and that Cal/EPA charged the absences against her leave balances. Consequently, Cal/EPA did not charge the employee's leave balances for the 768 hours that she was absent from work; instead, it paid her \$23,320 for these hours.

Finding #1: A Cal/EPA employee failed to promptly submit time sheets that accurately reported her absences from work during a 23-month period.

From August 2006 through June 2008, the employee did not submit monthly time sheets at the end of each pay period that accurately documented the time she spent working and the time she was absent. For the 23 pay periods we examined during the investigation, the employee never submitted time sheets for five pay periods, she submitted time sheets up to several months late for 12 pay periods, and she promptly submitted time sheets for just six pay periods. However, management declined to approve nearly all of the time sheets that the employee submitted late or on time because the time sheets either did not account for all absences or because the time sheets reported overtime work that had not received preapproval. Without the approved time sheets, Cal/EPA did not record the employee's absences or overtime in its leave accounting system. Consequently, Cal/EPA did not charge the employee's leave balances for the 768 hours that she was absent from work during the 23-month period; instead, it paid her \$23,320 for these hours.

Cal/EPA's Action: Partial corrective action taken.

Cal/EPA approved the 23 timesheets in September 2008. In addition, it reported in September 2008 that it had recalculated, updated, and corrected the employee's leave balances to reflect her actual absences and overtime worked, based on the latest approved time sheets, for all pay periods through August 2008. Further, Cal/EPA notified us that it planned to establish an accounts receivable for 24 hours the employee was docked pay in September 2006.

Investigative Highlight . . .

An employee of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) failed to promptly submit accurate time sheets during a 23-month period. As a result, Cal/EPA did not charge the employee's leave balances for 768 hours when she was absent, and it paid her \$23,320 for those hours.

Finding #2: Cal/EPA officials failed to take sufficient actions to correct the employee's lax time reporting and because of their inaction, the employee's absences were not charged against her leave balances.

Not only did the employee fail to submit her time sheets accurately and promptly, but the Cal/EPA officials responsible for managing her day-to-day activities and monitoring her time and attendance also failed to ensure that the employee submitted monthly time sheets that correctly reported her absences and time worked. The employee worked for Official A, who assigned Official B and then Official C to monitor the employee's time and attendance and to approve her time sheets. In particular, the efforts made by Official A and Official C in 2007 and early 2008 did little to resolve the employee's failure to accurately report her absences and overtime, and to promptly complete her time sheets. Official A assigned Official C around March 2007 to monitor the employee's time and attendance and to approve her time sheets. In May 2007 Official A met with the employee to counsel her about her absenteeism. However, the meeting notes indicate that Official A did not discuss the employee's failure to submit her time sheets promptly and accurately. Furthermore, Official C offered evidence that she tried to pressure the employee to comply with the time-reporting requirements through some oral conversations and numerous e-mails but the employee did not comply. Yet, Official C took no action to enforce her requests for compliance.

Cal/EPA's Action: Partial corrective action taken.

In September 2008 Cal/EPA informed us that Official A had issued a counseling memorandum to the employee, which discussed the employee's failure to promptly submit time sheets that accurately accounted for her absences. Moreover, Cal/EPA notified us that Official C had issued another counseling memorandum to the employee, which described the implementation of administrative controls to ensure that the employee correctly accounts for her absences and promptly completes her time sheets and other time reporting documents. Furthermore, Cal/EPA reported that, as soon as possible, it planned to transfer the employee to another position with a different assignment that does not require significant overtime. It stated that the new assignment would allow the employee to be more closely monitored by a different supervisor.