

In 1987, the Department of the Environment was created to improve enforcement of environmental laws and regulations in Maryland (Chapter 306, Acts of 1987). The Department assists and expedites the restoration of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and enhances State efforts to improve air and water quality and prevent pollution from hazardous and solid wastes. The Department also helps local governments perform their significant environmental and public health roles.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for all major environmental programs in Maryland. Its purpose is to foster and protect the public health and well-being by providing an environment free of the uncontrolled release or disposal of toxic, hazardous, or undesirable substances or emissions (Code Environment Article, secs. 1-101 through 13-602).

Within the Department are regulatory programs for water pollution control, air and water quality control, hazardous and solid waste management, sediment control, and stormwater management. These programs formerly were administered by the Office of Environmental Programs, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and by the Water Resources Administration, Department of Natural Resources.

The Department was reorganized in 1988 into seven main units. Three assistant secretariats oversee Toxics, Environmental Science and Health; Planning and Capital Programs; and Operations. Four administrations are responsible for Air Management; Hazardous and Solid Waste Management; Water Management; and Sediment and Stormwater Management.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Appointed by the Governor with Senate advice and consent, the Secretary of the Environment heads the Department. The Secretary appoints the Deputy Secretary with the approval of the Governor.

In addition to administrative responsibilities, the Secretary (or the Secretary's designee) is authorized to subpoena any person or evidence, administer oaths, and take depositions and other testimony.

The Secretary is responsible for investigating the influence of locality, employment, habit, and other conditions on health and for researching the causes of diseases and mortality, to the extent that they may relate to environmental factors. The Secretary also may institute studies to obtain information about cancers caused by carcinogens and toxic substances, and the incidence of these diseases.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY, TOXICS, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND HEALTH

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Under the Assistant Secretary for Toxics, Environmental Science and Health are the Center for Radiological Health, the Toxics Information and Operations Center, the Center for Environmental Health, and the Center for Special Toxics. The Assistant Secretary is aided by four advisory boards: Controlled Hazardous Substance Advisory Council, Advisory Council on Lead Poisoning, Radiation

Control Advisory Board, and Council on Toxic Substances.

The Assistant Secretary is responsible for many programs formerly overseen by the Science and Health Advisory Group. The Centers under the Assistant Secretary provide scientific and medical expertise to the Department and to the public and private sectors. They formulate toxic chemical strategy and develop criteria for that strategy. Maintaining a repository of health effects information, the Centers conduct special health effects studies and serve as consultants and advisors for the Department.

The Assistant Secretary's role in setting criteria and standards has considerable impact on the health and welfare of Marylanders. The role is shared with the federal government. When differences in scientific judgment occur, negotiations with the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the federal Food and Drug Administration, and public and private parties in the State often are needed to protect public health.

In developing strategy and criteria, the Centers under the Assistant Secretary integrate toxic substances strategy; define scientific criteria for toxic pollutants; and devise mass balance accounting schemes for toxic chemicals. They also formulate asbestos inspection and abatement criteria and risk assessment protocols.

The Assistant Secretary oversees a health registries system for toxic substances, birth defects, cancer, and occupational disease. The registries offer data that can be linked and studied for possible relationships. The system also includes location and quantities of toxic substances, as well as information on incidents related to their manufacture, use, disposal, and transport.