

# EPA IS FAILING to follow the science on TCE and fetal heart defects

Many of EPA's most significant actions take place in the fine print of technical language. But they matter greatly to whether resulting rules will be health protective or leave people in harm's way.

A key example is EPA's failure to follow the science on fetal heart defects from prenatal exposure to TCE. **Two important issues** that warrant your attention:

1. EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSP) is **failing to correct the most egregious example of political interference to undermine scientific integrity** that occurred under the last administration
2. Failing to amend the risk evaluation in question **directly contradicts President Biden's Memorandum to restore trust in government through science** and integrity and the first action item in EPA's plan to address environmental justice, which states a commitment to "follow the science"



## BACKGROUND



In EPA's draft risk evaluation of Trichloroethylene – a solvent used for cleaning and degreasing- EPA scientists identified fetal heart defects as the most the most sensitive outcome (endpoint) for exposure to TCE. (It has been reported that political officials during the prior administration interfered with these findings, which resulted in EPA ignoring this critical evidence in its decision-making.)

Instead, EPA set immunosuppression and autoimmunity as the key endpoints for determining whether a TCE condition of use presents "unreasonable risks." Why does this matter? The critical exposure level for immunological effects occurs more than **250x higher** than for fetal heart malformations. Thus, failing to use fetal heart malformations will put more people at risk. **There is no credible scientific justification for ignoring evidence of fetal heart defects in evaluating TCE's risks to health.**

The current administration promised to restore scientific integrity to EPA and other agencies, but despite assurances, EPA is not revising the TCE risk evaluation to ensure it protects health and fetal development.

In fact, in a March 20, 2021 email to OCSP staff, then Acting Administrator Michal Freedhoff correctly stated:

*"White House staff directed OCSP career staff to alter the draft TCE risk evaluation to change the point of departure used for making determinations of risk to a less sensitive endpoint. While the risk evaluation included a description of the more sensitive endpoint (fetal heart malformations), it was no longer used to determine whether there is unreasonable risk from TCE. Unreasonable risks were nevertheless identified for most uses of TCE, but the magnitude of the risk from exposures to TCE would have been greater had EPA relied upon the fetal cardiac defect endpoint that had been used in previous EPA peer-reviewed assessments."*

**Nearly a year later, EPA has failed to correct the TCE risk evaluation, and we've been told that they do not plan to do so.**

## ACTION ITEMS

Request EPA and OCSP:

1. **Better protect developing fetuses by immediately revising the TCE risk evaluation**
2. **Adopt and follow the most up-to-date science for future risk evaluations**

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