

# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY Combating Fraud, Waste, And Abuse On The Environmental Scene



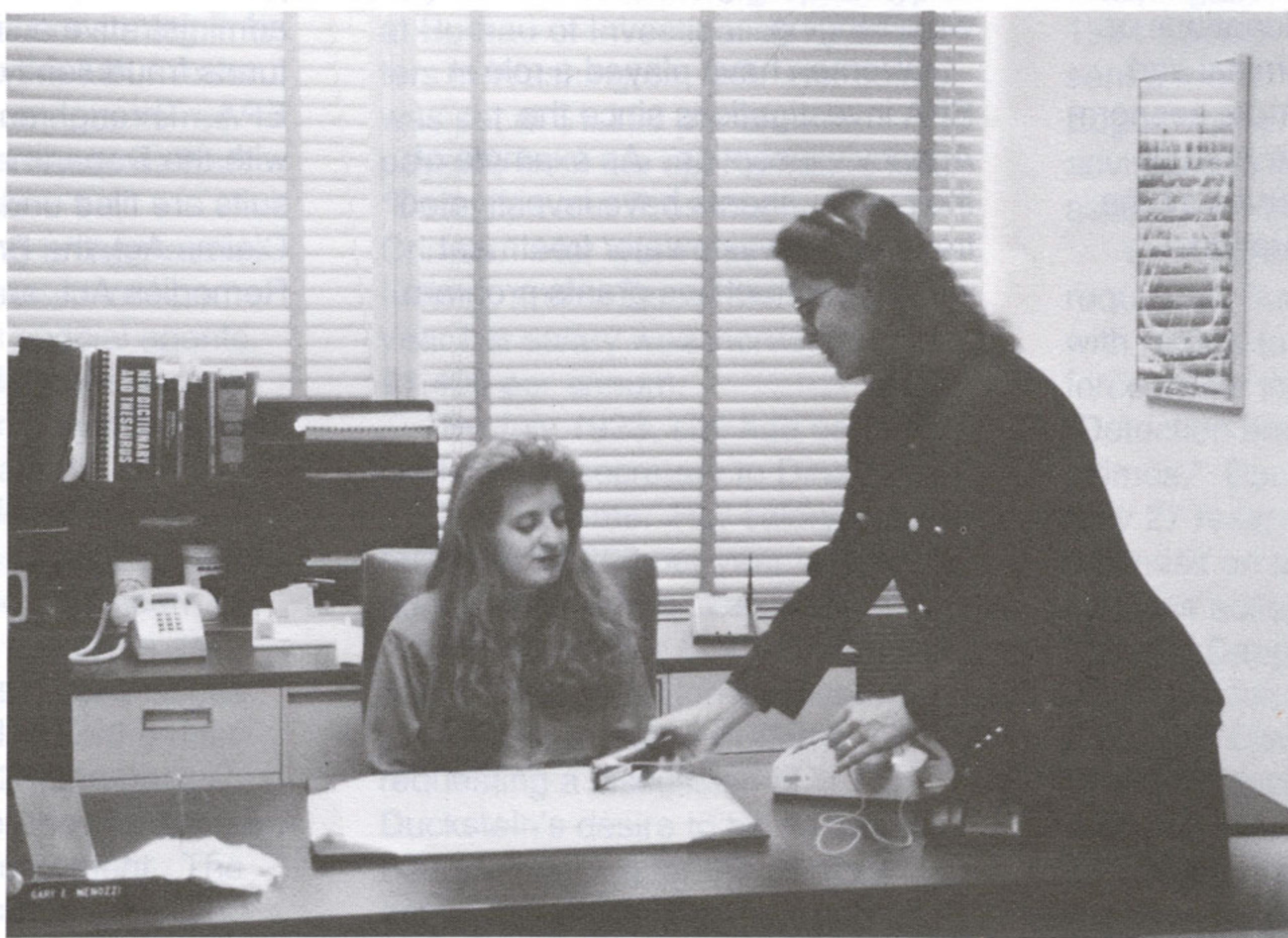
Deputy Inspector General Anna Virbick (seated center) briefs OI Special Agents (l. to r.) Vivian Najarro, Patricia Brady, Joan Nugent, Lori Fairchild, and Lorraine Gentile at Headquarters (photo by Steve Delaney).



Philadelphia Special Agent Kim Smith explains site remediation.



Boston Special Agents Diane Gallagher (l) and Phyllis Pelner (r) survey Superfund clean-up site.



Chicago Special Agent Mary Kay Fahey (standing) instructs office staffer in use of recording equipment.

The growth of the Environmental Protection Agency during its 20 year history has paralleled the public's determination to protect and preserve its environment. The Agency's challenge in the 1990s, dubbed by many the "Decade of the Environment," is to strengthen and enforce environmental legislation. In meeting this challenge, the Office of Inspector General has a key role in protecting the integrity of the Agency's programs and in promoting the efficient use of its scarce resources.

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, created Offices of Inspector General to consolidate existing investigative and audit resources in independent organizations headed by Inspectors General.

EPA established its Office of Inspector General (OIG) January 1980. As an agency with a massive public works budget, EPA is vulnerable to various kinds of financial abuses. The OIG's role is to review EPA's financial transactions, program operations, and administrative activities; investigate allegations or evidence of possible criminal and civil violations; and promote economic, efficient, and effective Agency operations. The OIG serves as the Agency's fiscal and operational watchdog.

The EPA Inspector General is John C. Martin and the Deputy Inspector General is Anna H. Virbick. The OIG functions through three major offices, each headed by an Assistant Inspector General: Office of Audit, Office of Investigations, and Office of Management. Criminal investigators are part of the Office of Investigations, headed by Assistant Inspector General Daniel S. Sweeney. Agents are located in headquarters, five divisional offices, and the Washington field office.

Female investigators represent approximately 21% of the Office of Investigations, the investigative component of the OIG. Coming from such diverse backgrounds as IRS-CI, VA, GSA, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, U.S. Park Service, U.S. Marshals Service, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation, our female agents represent a broad spectrum of investigative experience and expertise. Such diversity provides the Office of Investigations with a wealth of talent and the ability to conduct investigations which are wide ranging.

Women have played a role in EPA investigations since the Agency's inception. As example of their work, agents have investigated fraud in the wastewater treatment works constructions grants program,

an antipollution effort representing \$6.8 billion in federal obligations. Under the Superfund program, created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, as amended, recent investigations of the Contract Lab Program have uncovered fraud in the laboratory testing for the presence of hazardous chemicals. Fraudulent analyses, undetected, could result in a danger to the public health and safety as well as the unnecessary expenditure of cleanup funds. In the area of contracts and procurement practices, OIG investigations have responded to allegations of bid rigging, bribery, collusion and false claims. Further, our agents investigate allegations and indications of possible wrongdoing or misconduct by EPA employees and persons or firms acting in an official capacity directly with EPA or through its grantees.

Investigations by the EPA-OIG provide the basis for not only criminal prosecutions, but also civil and administrative actions to recover funds fraudulently obtained from EPA. Through cooperative efforts with the Department of Justice, civil suits are filed under the False Claims Act, the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act, and other authorities.