NEW REPORT NOTES PROGRESS, RECOMMENDS ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS TO STRENGTHEN EPA’S CHEMICAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON (May 6, 2014) – The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released today a report detailing their review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS). This congressionally-mandated report evaluated EPA’s progress for improving the IRIS program by implementing the recommendations made by the National Research Council after their review of the draft formaldehyde assessment in 2011.

The following statement can be attributed to the American Chemistry Council (ACC):

“We welcome this important report and are particularly encouraged that the NAS has recognized the need for EPA to address fundamental issues with the IRIS program. Importantly, the NAS report also singles out the valuable contributions made under the leadership of Dr. Ken Olden to address some of these concerns.

“The NAS report outlines several continuing concerns with the IRIS assessment methodology, including the lack of clear criteria for evaluating the available scientific information. Over the past several years, a strong case has been made detailing the critical need for improving IRIS in order to provide better support for public health decisions.

“The U.S. Government Accountability Office has listed IRIS as a ‘high risk program,’ and Congress has been compelled to act in a bipartisan fashion to call for this review by the NAS. This report marks yet another important milestone for identifying and addressing areas for improving the IRIS program. However, the release of this report should not be viewed as a stopping point.

“ACC has strongly supported improvements in stakeholder engagement that Dr. Olden has implemented. Unfortunately, progress toward more substantive improvements, such as in data evaluation and evidence integration, has lagged. Today’s report reiterates the need for continued improvement for EPA to achieve the scientific accuracy and transparency necessary for the development of high quality, reliable IRIS assessments.

“A number of NAS recommendations align well with ACC’s own principles for enhancing chemical assessments. For example, the NAS report calls on EPA to develop and implement consistent and transparent protocols for evaluating data for relevance, reliability and quality. It also advises EPA to improve study integration methods and recommends that the Agency move away from overreliance on single point estimates of toxicity values.
“We hope that EPA will take quick steps to adopt the recommendations of the report, including the development of a structured process to integrate the scientific evidence into assessments. Work on assessments currently in progress will benefit from a more transparent and systematic approach.

“ACC and our members are committed to strengthening the process for conducting assessments under IRIS and other government assessment programs. We look forward to continuing our constructive work with EPA, including the adoption of many of the concepts outlined in our principles and this report.”

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The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a $770 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation’s largest exporters, accounting for twelve percent of all U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation’s critical infrastructure.