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Scientific Review of the Proposed Risk Assessment Bulletin from the Office of Management and Budget

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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

January 2007

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Scientific Review of the Proposed Risk Assessment Bulletin from the Office of Management and Budget

Committee to Review the OMB Risk Assessment Bulletin

Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology

Division on Earth and Life Studies

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

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Preface

In an effort to improve the overall practice of risk assessment in the federal government, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released its Proposed Risk Assessment Bulletin on January 9, 2006, with a stated objective to "enhance the technical quality and objectivity of risk assessments prepared by federal agencies." The bulletin presents specific standards for risk assessments disseminated by federal agencies. OMB and the sponsoring agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration) requested that the National Research Council (NRC) conduct a scientific review of the bulletin.

In this report, the NRC's Committee to Review the OMB Risk Assessment Bulletin provides its assessment of the OMB bulletin. The committee evaluates the standards presented in the bulletin, comments on the impact of the bulletin on the practice of risk assessment in the federal government, identifies critical elements missing from the bulletin, evaluates the consistency of the bulletin with previous reports of NRC and other organizations, and determines whether the draft bulletin has met OMB's stated objective.

This report has been reviewed in draft form by persons chosen for their diverse perspectives and technical expertise in accordance with procedures approved by NRC's Report Review Committee. The purpose of this independent review is to provide candid and critical comments that will assist the institution in making its published report as sound as possible and to ensure that the report meets institutional standards of objectivity, evidence, and responsiveness to the study charge. The review comments and draft manuscript remain confidential to protect the integrity of the deliberative process. We wish to thank the following for their review of this report: Lawrence Barnthouse, LWB Environmental Services, Inc.; Robert J. Budnitz, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; David Gaylor, Gaylor and Associates; J. Paul Gilman, Oak Ridge Center for Advanced Studies; Daniel Krewski, University of Ottawa; Jonathan Levy, Harvard School of Public Health; Roger O. McClellan, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Ali Mosleh, University of Maryland; Gilbert Omenn, University of Michigan Medical School; and Paul Slovic, Decision Research.

Although the reviewers listed above have provided many constructive comments and suggestions, they were not asked to endorse the conclusions or recommendations, nor did they see the final draft of the report before its release. The review of this report was overseen by B. John Garrick, Laguna Beach, California, and John C. Bailar, III, University of Chicago. Appointed by NRC, they were responsible for making certain that an independent examination of this report was carried out in accordance with institutional procedures and that all review comments were carefully considered. Responsibility for the final content of this report rests entirely with the committee and the institution.

The committee gratefully acknowledges the following for making presentations to the committee: Linda Abbott, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Nancy Beck, Office of Management and Budget; Al Cobb, Department of Energy; Shannon Cunniff, Department of Defense; Homayoon Dezfuli, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Steve Galson, Christopher Portier, and Christine Sofge, Department of Health and Human Services; John Graham, RAND Graduate School; Judith Graham, American Chemistry Council; George Gray, Environmental Protection Agency; Stephen Heinig,

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The committee is also grateful for the assistance of the NRC staff in preparing this report. Staff members who contributed to this effort are Jennifer Saunders, associate program officer; Norman Grossblatt, senior editor; John Brown, program associate; and James J. Reisa, director of the Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology. Primary among the staff was Ellen K. Mantus, project director, whose knowledge, careful working with the committee, and extreme diligence brought this report to completion.

I would especially like to thank the members of the committee for their efforts throughout the development of this report.

John F. Ahearne, Chair
Committee to Review the OMB Risk
Assessment Bulletin

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