

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-270](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

According to DOD, corrosion can significantly affect the cost of facility maintenance and the expected service life of DOD facilities. While corrosion is not always highly visible, it can lead to structural failure, loss of capital investment, and environmental damage. In response to a congressional request, GAO reviewed DOD's corrosion prevention and control program for facilities and infrastructure. In this report, GAO assessed the extent that DOD (1) met reporting requirements, (2) maintained accurate return-on-investment data in its records, and (3) fully informed relevant officials of its corrosion-control efforts. GAO reviewed DOD policies and plans, met with corrosion-control officials, and visited and interviewed officials at 32 installations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends five actions to improve DOD's project reporting and tracking, the accuracy of its return-on-investment data, and its communication with stakeholders on corrosion-control activities for facilities and other infrastructure. DOD partially concurred with three recommendations and did not agree with two. DOD plans to implement a web-based tracking tool to improve data timeliness and standardization, among other actions. GAO continues to believe that its recommendations to improve project reporting are warranted, that the Corrosion Office should use its existing authorities to identify and implement other incentives for project managers to meet reporting milestones and that DOD should revise its guidance so that Corrosion Executives would assist with the oversight of project reporting.

View [GAO-13-270](#). For more information, contact James R. McTigue Jr. at (202) 512-7968 or mctiguej@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

DOD Should Improve Reporting and Communication on Its Corrosion Prevention and Control Activities

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has invested more than \$68 million in 80 projects in fiscal years 2005 through 2010 to demonstrate new technology addressing infrastructure-related corrosion, but project managers have not submitted all required reports on the results of these efforts to the Corrosion Policy and Oversight Office (Corrosion Office). The *DOD Corrosion Prevention and Mitigation Strategic Plan* requires project managers to submit a final report when a project is complete, and submit a follow-on report within two years after the military department implements the technology. As of November 2012, GAO found that project managers had not submitted final reports for 50 of the 80 projects (63 percent) funded in fiscal years 2005 through 2010. Also, project managers had not submitted follow-on reports for 15 of the 41 projects (37 percent) funded in fiscal years 2005 through 2007. GAO found that the Corrosion Office's tracking system lacks key information to help ensure that project managers meet reporting requirements. Furthermore, the Corrosion Office is not fully exercising its authority to identify and implement options or incentives to address funding and other reasons given for not meeting reporting milestones. Also, GAO found inconsistency among the military departments' Corrosion Control and Prevention Executives' (Corrosion Executives) in holding project managers accountable for submitting the required reports. Without effective actions to ensure timely submission of final and follow-on reports, decision makers may be unaware of potentially useful technologies to address corrosion.

The Corrosion Office maintains records on its infrastructure-related corrosion projects, including initial and reassessed return-on-investment estimates, for internal and external reporting, such as in DOD's annual budget report to Congress. GAO found that the Corrosion Office's records showed updates to the initial estimates for the proposed projects, but the office has not consistently updated its records to show the reassessed estimates included in the follow-on reports. Specifically, GAO found that the Corrosion Office did not update data in its records for 5 of 25 projects (20 percent) with completed follow-on reports. Federal internal control standards require agencies to use internal controls to provide assurance that they have reliable financial and other reports for internal and external use. Without accurate and timely data, Congress and DOD managers may not have reliable information on the estimated return on investment as they oversee corrosion projects.

DOD's Corrosion Executives use mechanisms, such as briefings and site visits, to collect and disseminate information on corrosion-control activities in their departments; however, GAO found that slightly more than half of public works officials interviewed at 32 installations were unaware of DOD's corrosion-related offices and resources. Under federal statute, Corrosion Executives are tasked with coordinating corrosion activities in their departments. GAO found that many relevant service officials interviewed did not receive key corrosion-control information because their Corrosion Executives do not have targeted communication strategies and accompanying action plans. Without a strategy and action plan, managers of facilities and infrastructure may not have access to all available information on efficient methods for corrosion prevention and control.