

# An Overview of the United States' Toxics Release Reporting Program

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## ABSTRACT

The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) is the first database ever created in the United States that combines information regarding releases of pollutants to air, water, land, and underground injection on a chemical-by-chemical and facility-by-facility basis. This presentation will describe the origins of the TRI, the concept of public access to environmental information in the United States, and the reporting requirements in terms of which chemicals, companies, and types of information are collected. It will discuss the data that have been reported and the resources needed by government, the public, and industry to design and implement such a program.

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I am the director of the Economics and Technology Division in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics. My division is responsible for writing the regulations that design and implement the Toxics Release Inventory, which we often call the TRI.

The second speaker this morning is Linda Travers, who is my partner in Toxics Release Inventory activities. As the director of the Information Management Division, she makes sure that the data are collected, properly entered into a computerized database, managed, and then made available to interested parties.

On behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, I would like to thank the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for encouraging us to have this conference. I would also like to thank in advance the many speakers who will share their knowledge of and history with the Toxics Release Inventory in the United States.

We are privileged to have more than 20 countries represented here today. I recognize that English may be a problem for some of you and am sorry we cannot provide translators. We want to make this an informal exchange of information and ideas, so do not hesitate to interrupt speakers if you do not understand what they are saying.

The United States, as many countries, is facing stiff challenges to its environmental policy. The protection of the environment is no longer a passing fad; it has become a major public policy priority. EPA's administrator, William Reilly, noted recently that the environment is moving from the margins of public policy to the center. It is now relevant in public policy areas where it never was before, such as trade, international economic policy, and foreign aid, and also in critical relations with many other important countries, including Canada, Central Europe, Brazil, and India, most of whom are represented here today.

The environment is newly relevant even to issues of war and peace, as witnessed by our con-