



## TRI Success Stories

For nearly 20 years, the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) has been an essential tool in alerting emergency responders, researchers, workers, public health officials, environmentalists, community residents, and federal and state officials to the presence of toxic chemicals. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to undermine this successful program.

The EPA plans to allow companies to: (1) release ten times the amount of toxics before detailed reporting is required; (2) withhold information on Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxins (PBTs), like lead and mercury; and (3) report every other year, instead of annually.

The EPA should abandon its plans. TRI is used to aid in the reduction of toxic pollution by:

- Community Groups
- Local Governments
- Chemical Companies
- Researchers
- Individuals
- Workers

### Groups Use TRI Data to Inform Communities and Reduce Pollution

#### Neighborhood Group Takes Action Against Local Polluters

Chicago, Illinois -- *The Chicago Tribune* reports that TRI data informed concerned residents of Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood that the nearby brass foundry was the city's largest emitter of airborne lead. In 2004, the residents formed the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization and pushed for air testing, which found highly elevated levels of lead in the area. As a result the group was able to secure agreements from the company to reduce emissions.

#### Informing Communities About Toxic Chemicals

Dorchester, Massachusetts -- The JSI Center for Environmental Health Studies, based in Boston, conducted a project called, 'Informed Communities: Environmental Health Initiative.' With support from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, they piloted training programs on using the TRI in Dorchester, which compelled health centers and community groups to use the TRI to address local environmental health concerns. The project was such a success that it is being disseminated to other New England communities.

#### Lower Emission Standards Are Approved

Louisville, Kentucky -- The *Louisville Courier-Journal* reports that on June 21, Louisville city officials approved a new program that requires industrial facilities to reduce emissions of hazardous air pollutants. The TRI was critical in passing the new clean-air program. As Tim Duncan of the Rubbertown Emergency Action Community Taskforce (REACT) explains, "the combination of the TRI numbers and local air monitor data provided a powerful combination of numbers for us to use to show that Hazardous Air Pollution levels were serious in our area."

### **TRI Used in Designating Area Environmental Justice Zone for Air Quality**

Phoenix, Arizona -- Terry Greene of the John Snow Institute (JSI) tells OMB Watch, "Central South Phoenix experiences health disparities that may be related to environmental health. Neighborhoods for Justice worked with JSI, Arizona State University, and the Arizona Foundation and examined TRI emissions and other indicators of environmental status alongside of rates of diseases and conditions such as lead poisoning, asthma, and low-birthweight. As a result, the city designated the area an environmental justice zone for air quality, bringing much needed attention to pollution problems."

### **TRI Used to Rank Top Polluters in State**

Richmond, Virginia -- Joshua Low with Sierra Club's Virginia Chapter tells OMB Watch, "I recently used the TRI to rank the top 12 polluters in Virginia, and noticed that the Honeywell plant in Hopewell, VA decreased their pollution by a significant amount. I called the plant and found out they installed pollution controls that reduced costs, pollution, and wastes. During college, I lived near a pesticides plant that once produced heptachlor and chlordane. These chemicals are so toxic that Rachel Carson spent time on them in *Silent Spring*. Now they have the only toxic waste incinerator in the city. It is my right to know what they put in my air and water. This is information that communities need to know; they have a right to know."

### **Monitoring Local Polluters**

Green Bay, Wisconsin -- The Clean Water Action Council of North East Wisconsin recently told OMB Watch, "we use the TRI frequently to call attention to toxic releases, as the counties we work with are home to some of the state's top toxic sources and highest cancer rates. TRI helps us understand the relative importance of various pollution sources, focus our public education efforts where they can make the most difference, and is the only comprehensive dataset of its kind, providing valuable insights which the public would otherwise be unaware of."

### **TRI Used to Protect Inlet Watershed**

Homer, Alaska -- The Cook Inlet Keeper, a citizens' group that works to protect Alaska's Cook Inlet, uses the TRI to generate media coverage highlighting the pollution being released by industries into the inlet. The group uses the news coverage to make companies aware that their toxic pollution is being watched and to encourage them to make reductions. In this way, they act as an important check in an area that experiences almost 2 million pounds of toxic pollution each year.

### **Mercury Phase-Out Reduces Toxic Exposures**

Twin Cities, Minnesota -- Minneapolis' Riverside coal-fired power plant (owned by Xcel Energy) produces the majority of mercury emissions in the Twin Cities area- and it does so in the heart of the south Minneapolis community. In 2003, the Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (EJAM) used TRI data to research the plant's emissions. After discovering the dangers their neighbors were facing on a daily basis, they pushed for a public hearing about the plant's activities. The active participation and informed testimony catalyzed by TRI resulted in Riverside's agreement to switch to natural gas. As they wait for the changeover, EJAM continues to use TRI to keep the community informed and hold Riverside accountable.

### **TRI Exposes "Toxic Mixing Zones"**

Portland, Oregon -- Dangerous toxins are being dumped into the rivers around Portland, and residents would have no idea if not for the TRI. In the Toxic Mixing Zones along the area's rivers the EPA permits chemical dumping, suspending Clean Water laws. Little reporting is required of what goes into Toxic Mixing Zones, and dumping zones are not marked. Many of the dumping zones are well-used fishing areas, boat launches, beaches and parks. One of the most popular swimming areas is surrounded by seven mixing zones. The TRI is the most comprehensive way of alerting the hundreds of families who recreate in these areas about the health risks they face. Using TRI data, the local Sierra Club has been able to educate the public about the high levels of lead, mercury, cadmium and aluminum to which they are exposed.

### **TRI Informs State Environmental Budget Priorities**

New Jersey -- For the activists of the New Jersey Sierra Club, TRI is a key political accountability tool. When Governor Whitman was making drastic cuts to the Department of Environmental Protection, they used the data to show that the levels of toxins in New Jersey were increasing for the first time in 20 years. More recently, the data helped prove that while government officials claimed overall toxics were decreasing, water toxics were going up. This allowed the group to advocate for a state water protection program to deal with the water contamination caused by sprawl.

### **Hazardous Waste Burning Extinguished**

Louisville, Nebraska -- 30 miles southwest of Omaha, in a rapidly expanding area of Omaha suburbs, is the Ashgrove Cement Company. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ashgrove Cement began accepting hazardous waste to burn as alternative fuel. Alarmed by this toxic "recycling" program, area residents used TRI to track what was being burned and where the hazardous waste was originating from. The TRI provided the specific facts citizens needed to motivate their neighbors into action. As a result, Ashgrove Cement suspended the hazardous waste burning program.

### **TRI Exposes the Top Terrible Ten Polluters**

Memphis, Tennessee -- The Memphis Sierra Club uses the TRI to educate the community in their annual Terrible Ten Report. This report highlights the top ten polluters in the county, showing their estimated emissions for the year. To encourage users of the report to engage in dialog with local environmental agencies about discharges, pollution reduction plans, and emergency management planning, the Sierra Club lists hotline numbers and the names and phone numbers of plant managers. The Terrible Ten brings information on chemical releases still closer to home by listing health effects for the toxic substances to which people are exposed. While no claims are made that the toxic discharges are causing specific health problems, the report provides the information needed for people to form their own conclusions.

### **TRI Used in Ongoing Campaign to Close Hazardous Waste Landfill**

Peoria, Illinois -- The Sierra Club Heart of Illinois Chapter uses TRI data in its efforts to get the Peoria County Board to close a hazardous waste landfill, owned by the private company located at the edge of town. The TRI data has revealed that the landfill -- less than three miles from 20,000 Peoria residents -- contains dangerously high levels of chromium and cadmium, and

emits large amounts of air-borne pollution. The landfill company has applied for a permit that would extend the landfill's life by 15 years.

### **TRI Helps Put End to Toxic Waste**

Seattle, Washington -- The OMB Watch that "in 1997, we found out the practice was occurring and then looked to TRI data to find that steel mills were sending millions of pounds of lead to be turned into fertilizer. Shedding light on this and taking regulatory action has basically put an end to the practice of bagging steel mill waste for fertilizer."

## **Local Governments Use TRI Data to Reduce Pollution**

### **TRI Used in Katrina Cleanup**

New Orleans, LA -- After Katrina, emergency workers and public-health advocates used TRI data to identify the possible threats in the air and water. By tapping into the TRI database, officials discovered that New Orleans and its surrounding parishes host 66 chemical plants, refineries and petroleum bulk-storage facilities, creating a toxic stew of more than 875 chemicals.

### **TRI Used in State Pollution Prevention Program**

Olympia, Washington -- Idell Hansen from the Washington State Department of Ecology tells OMB Watch, "We use the TRI to enroll companies in the states 'pollution prevention' program. EPA's proposed changes to the TRI program would compel up to 15 % of the facilities to drop out of our pollution prevention program -- lost opportunities for pollution reductions. For this reason alone, we think the proposed rule is a bad idea."

### **TRI Data Used to Reduce Hazardous Air Pollutants**

Phoenix, Arizona -- The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) also uses the TRI to address Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs) emissions. The ADEQ used TRI data to identify facilities that had significantly increased their HAP releases from 2002 to 2003. The agency works with these facilities to reduce their air emissions. Alternate-year reporting would have missed these pollution increases.

### **TRI Data is 'Single Most Important Environmental Requirement We Have'**

Louisiana -- As reported by the *The Tampa Tribune*, Paul Templet, head of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality from 1988 to 1992, credits TRI data as the most important data source used to clean up the environment while creating jobs. Moving from a period in which they had a 12.4 percent unemployment rate and the highest toxic discharge in the country, Louisiana "created 25,000 jobs in that four years, and it was purely from environmental spending." Redesigning plants to cut pollution made operations more efficient, and Louisiana's toxic emissions dropped 50 percent by 1992. Templet credits TRI data: "It's probably the single most important environmental requirement we have."

## **Chemical Companies Willing to Continue Reporting TRI Data**

### **DuPont to Continue Reporting Toxic Chemicals**

As reported by *Chemical & Policy Engineering News*, even if the EPA goes forward with the rule changes, DuPont would probably continue to collect and release this information annually. The company uses TRI data internally. Plus, its employees, some investor groups, environmental groups, and communities around DuPont facilities expect to find TRI and other waste and emission information updated each year on the company's website. "DuPont is committed to being transparent about its environmental performance," states Edwin L. Mongan III, global environmental stewardship leader for DuPont. "This is part of the corporation's commitment to excellence in environmental stewardship and sustainable growth."

### **Boeing States TRI Reporting is 'Good Business Practice'**

Seattle, WA -- The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reports that Kirk Thomson, director of environmental affairs for The Boeing Co., which cut toxic emissions 39 percent over the past five years, believes that the biennial reporting "wouldn't make a difference to us." "We're set up to do it annually," he said. "It's just a good business practice to track your hazardous materials, how much you're using of each product and how much you're losing to the environment."

### **Facility States Reporting not a Burden**

Tampa Bay, Florida -- As reported by the *The Tampa Tribune*, companies state that they are accustomed to reporting TRI data and are willing to continue for years to come. Though they claim that reporting relaxation may be nice, Florida companies admit that reporting doesn't pose an unreasonable burden. "Any relaxation of reporting requirements is welcome, but we're accustomed to reporting every year, so it's something we're living with and can continue to live with," said Tom Edwards, environmental manager at CF Industries in Plant City, FL.

## **TRI Data Used by Researchers**

### **TRI Data Used by Public Health Physician to Monitor Air Pollution**

Dallas, TX -- The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* reports that, Dr. Arnold Schecter, a public-health physician at the University of Texas School of Public Health in Dallas, uses TRI data to monitor toxic releases in the Dallas/Fort Worth region and protect the public against air pollution which is "responsible for some increase in illness, possibly even increased mortality." The Dallas/Fort Worth region contains large power plants that rank among the largest polluters of mercury in North America. "Without periodic monitoring, it will not be possible to determine whether the air is becoming more or less polluted," Schecter said. "Decreasing the amount of information available on air quality seems a step backwards with respect to health."

### **TRI Data Identifies Heavy Industrial Polluters**

Athens, Georgia -- Amy Johnson tells OMB Watch, "For my Master's degree, I used TRI to investigate how social factors influence where heavy industrial polluters are located. For my job as an environmental consultant, I use TRI in addition to other sources to determine industries that may be contaminating my client's property. I imagine Georgia's environmental protection

division uses TRI even more as they must determine who is liable for polluting one area. TRI is the only way to access this kind of data to get the TOTAL picture."

## **Individuals Use TRI to Protect Their Families**

### **Mother Takes Action to Protect Son**

Modesto, California -- Haleh Niazmand, a recent transplant to Modesto, found out from TRI data that she and her family until recently lived between a quarter mile and four miles from several industrial facilities in Cedar Rapids, Iowa that released neurotoxins, including mercury into the air and water. Niazmand, whose three-year-old child has regressive autism, tells OMB Watch, "the TRI made it plain that these facilities were releasing poisons into the air. This information will help me make informed decision regarding my son's detox regime."

## **TRI Used to Protect Workers**

### **Trainings to Protect Workers Use TRI**

Albion, New York -- Diane Heminway with the United Steelworkers Association (USWA) conducts trainings using the TRI to better inform workers of the health risks associated with the chemicals to which they are exposed. According to Heminway, the trainings teach workers to spot reporting violations or inconsistencies, and companies with formal employee participation programs are up to three times more successful at reducing pollution.