



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

Office of  
Environmental Information

## 2007 TRI-MEweb Delivers Results for the TRI Program

The 2007 *Toxicity Release Inventory-Made Easy Web (TRI-MEweb)* is part of an e-GOV Burden Reduction Initiative delivering great program results in 2007 and other benefits to the regulated TRI community. *TRI-MEweb* is EPA's electronic solution for completing TRI reports. The 2007 *TRI-MEweb* significantly reduces the reporting burden of facilities filing via web, abates EPA and state programs data collection transaction costs, and delivers impressive program performance efficiencies. The 2007 *TRI-MEweb* is a leap forward towards a one-stop-shop paperless TRI reporting system.

### The Challenge

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), P.L. 1986, requires EPA and states to annually collect data on releases and transfers of about 650 chemicals and chemical categories from industrial and federal facilities and make the data available to the public in the Toxics Release Inventory. The Pollution Prevention Act, P.L. 1990, requires that additional data on waste management and source reduction activities be reported under TRI. The goal of TRI is to empower citizens, through information, to hold companies and local governments accountable in terms of how toxic chemicals are managed. The TRI data often spurs companies to focus on their chemical management practices since they are being measured and made public. In addition, the data serves as a rough indicator of environmental progress over time.

One primary challenge for EPA programs is that information collection processes driven by paper based reporting results in long-time lags in order to extract, validate, load, and transform environmental data into public information. Furthermore, TRI paper based reporting can be labor intensive and burdensome too for facilities since they are required to file reports with both EPA and states. Also, some states do require different formats from the one required by EPA.

After field testing the *TRI-MEdesktop* software (*predecessor of TRI-MEweb*) in 2002 with states and members of the TRI communities, EPA successfully tested a pilot version of *TRI-MEweb* for submissions in four states in reporting year 2005. Next, EPA made *TRI-MEweb* available to facilities located in the 14 states participating in the TRI State Data Exchange for submission of 2006 reporting year (filed in July 2007). Recently, EPA made available to all facilities the 2007 *TRI-MEweb* (filed in July 2008) which was widely used this year.

### The Solution

*TRI-Made Easy Web (TRI-MEweb)* is a web-based application that can be accessed anywhere via internet. Unlike the desktop version of the *TRI-ME* software, *TRI-MEweb* requires no downloads or software installs. The preferred method to report to EPA is by the use of the *TRI-MEweb* application. *TRI-MEweb* allows facilities to file a paperless report, significantly reduce data errors, and receive instant receipt confirmation of their



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

Office of  
Environmental Information

submissions. Currently, EPA plans to offer *TRI-MEdesktop* software through the RY2008 (to be filed in July 2009) reporting period and then discontinue the desktop application.

### ***Leveraging the TRI State Data Exchange***

Submitting TRI reports to both EPA and a state environmental agency via *TRI-MEweb* requires one single transaction for those facilities that reside in states that operate a TRI data exchange node on the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (Exchange Network). EPA refers to this subset of the Exchange Network which is currently comprised of 18 operating TRI state nodes as the TRI State Data Exchange. In other words, EPA is leveraging the TRI State Data Exchange to streamline TRI reporting and filing requirements. Other facilities that reside in states lacking a TRI data exchange can still file a TRI report with EPA via the internet by using the *TRI-MEweb*. However, they are required to file a separate report with that state.

The loading of reports generated by third party TRI-software is not currently supported by 2007 *TRI-MEweb* (filed in July 2008). EPA plans to support Third Party TRI – software submittals for 2008 *TRI-MEweb* (to be filed in July 2009). 2007 *TRI-MEweb* uses an extensible markup language (XML) schema format instead of the *TRI-ME* flat file format used by third party TRI-software.

### ***TRI Data Flows***

EPA manages data flows from the *TRI-MEweb* application via the central data exchange (CDX which is EPA's node in the Exchange Network). As a result, access to EPA's *TRI-MEweb* requires users to register an account with CDX. This includes individuals who will prepare TRI forms with *TRI-MEweb* and individuals who will certify submissions prepared by *TRI-MEweb*. Additional access is controlled via an Access Key which allows preparers to pull up prior year data for their facilities and is distributed to prior year technical contacts as listed on their TRI Form.

### ***Public Access***

The public can access the most recent and historical TRI data online via a suite of EPA search tools:

- The "Electronic - Facility Data Release (e-FDR)" query tool allows retrieval of 2007 data (reported by July 1, 2008) from the TRI database in Envirofacts. The e-FDR is part of EPA's ongoing effort to make TRI data available sooner to the public at the front end of the review and validation process of data in TRI annual report filings. The e-FDR can better inform communities about releases of toxic chemicals in their neighborhood. Options including facility identification information and geographic criteria can be used to refine searches. The e-FDR is a facility-level, form-by-form release of TRI data, as submitted by facilities. The e-FDR does not include the aggregation of TRI data or national trend analyses.
- The Public Data Release (PDR) provides national analysis and trends as well as tools to support independent analyses. The data in the PDR undergo comprehensive data checks. Some data quality checks have been completed for the forms released under the e-FDR,



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

Office of  
Environmental Information

although facilities are still reviewing the forms to verify submissions and may revise their data prior to the release of the data in the PDR. In addition, the TRI program is completing final data quality checks on the data for subsequent release via the PDR TRI Explorer, from anywhere on the internet.

- The TRI Explorer is a searchable online database which lets users quickly get information about releases and transfers and other waste management activities - no database knowledge required! It provides access to the TRI data to help communities identify facilities and chemical disposal or other release patterns that warrant further study and analysis.
- Envirofacts is a single point of access to select EPA environmental data. This website provides access to several EPA databases (TRI being one of them) with information about environmental activities that may affect air, water, and land anywhere in the United States. With Envirofacts, you can learn more about these environmental activities in your area or you can generate maps of environmental information.

## **The Benefits**

### ***Delivering Value to the Information Provider***

The 2007 *TRI-MEweb* is an interactive, intelligent, user-friendly reporting tool that provides a variety of new or enhanced features:

- Work with data for multiple reporting years
- Automatic creation of draft current year forms based on last year's forms
- Automated Section 8 calculations
- Improved validation and data quality checks
- Facility and Chemical 'QuickLists' that streamline data entry by removing form sections that are not applicable

### ***Improving Program Performance***

With the advent of electronic reporting in the TRI program, the TRI program moved the Public Data Release date from June to February. This is a change from 12 months from receipt of the data to 8 months, which is a 33 % improvement over the past four years.

In addition, the TRI program has gone from 7% reporting electronically in 2002 to 78% in 2008, meeting or exceeding the OEI Action Plan Goal that is reported to the EPA Deputy Administrator, as part of Quality Management Report.

Prior to the advent of electronic reporting, the TRI program received approximately 90,000 chemical submissions that were 6 pages each. This meant that approximately 540,000 pages of paper were received, processed and stored by the TRI program each year. With the adoption of electronic reporting, only 4% of the 90,000 chemical submissions are submitted via paper in 2008, reducing the amount of paper received to approximately 21,600 pages.

The TRI State Data Exchange has similarly seen a growth in usage, starting from four pilot states in 2005 to 18 states in 2008. In 2007, 33,719 additional TRI forms would have had to be submitted to the states if the State Data Exchange were not available.



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

Office of  
Environmental Information

### ***Delivering Results***

By adopting the TRI State Data Exchange, EPA, the states and reporting community have all seen savings in burden, FTE devoted to the reporting process, and/or dollars. For example, the State of Indiana realized a reduction of 2.5 full time employees to process paper and diskette submissions between the 1997 and 2007, their second year in the program. These FTE were able to be re-deployed to pollution prevention activities within the state. Other states have realized similar reductions in data processing staff that can be redeployed into other activities.

Industry has also been able to realize burden reduction via the TRI State Data Exchange and the *TRI-MEweb* electronic reporting. Having to file only one report that is submitted to both the State and EPA, reduces the time and cost of reporting for TRI. The additional data quality aspects *TRI-MEweb* has provided gives facilities instance feedback about their submissions and allows them to make needed changes before submitting. This results in higher quality data being submitted to EPA and lowers the cost of agency review.

Finally, EPA has been able to redeploy costs spent on contractor resources to key in data received on paper to other efforts, such as improving *TRI-MEweb*, providing assistance with states to join the TRI State Data Exchange.

### **For More Information:**

James Maas, Acting Information Management Officer  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Environmental Information, Office of Planning, Resources, and Outreach  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 566-2778

Timothy Antisdell, Information Management Specialist  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Environmental Information, Office of Information Analysis and Access Resources, and Outreach  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 566-0733

Cory Wagner, *TRI-MEweb* Project Manager  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Environmental Information, Office of Information Access and Analysis  
TRI Program Division  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 566-1555

**TRI Program Web Site:** <<http://www.epa.gov/tri/>>