



The bottom line

PRTR reporting provides a basis for initiating environmental management programs such as ISO 14001 and for obtaining certification in Mexico's "Clean Industry" program.

A mandatory, publicly accessible PRTR offers an opportunity to secure important economic, social, health, and environmental benefits at the local, national and regional levels.



What is a pollutant release and transfer register?

A PRTR is an innovative recording tool consisting of detailed data on chemicals that industrial and other facilities release on-site or transfer off-site.

How does a PRTR work?

Individual facilities compile data on the amounts of specific chemical substances they release to air, water and land on-site, as well as their off-site transfers, and report this information annually to the government. The data are then compiled in a public register, allowing producers, their associations, policy makers and the public to track performance, pinpoint development strategies, and improve quality of life.

What are the benefits of a PRTR?

What gets measured gets managed

PRTRs help industry, government and citizens identify opportunities to reduce waste in production cycles. Through responsible, periodic reporting PRTRs help achieve:

- Knowledge of chemical releases and transfers
- Reduction of wastestreams
- More efficiency in production
- Cost savings for industry
- Better health for families and communities
- Improved relations between industry, community and government
- Ability to meet obligations under international agreements

For more information on North American PRTRs:

Mexico
Registro de Emisiones y Transferencias de Contaminantes (RETC)
Instituto Nacional de Ecología
 Mexico City
 Tel.: +(525) 524-3470
 Fax: +(525) 624-3584
 Web: www.ine.gob.mx/dggia/retc/index.html
 E-mail: hsalgado@ine.gob.mx

Emisiones Virtuales, Proyecto La Neta
 Web: <http://www.laneta.apc.org/emis>

United States
Toxics Release Inventory (TRI)
US Environmental Protection Agency
 Washington, DC
 Tel.: +(202) 260-1531
 Within the US toll free: (800) 424-9346
 Web: <http://www.epa.gov/tri>

Environmental Defense Scorecard
 Web: <http://www.scorecard.org>

Right-To-Know Network
 Washington, DC
 Tel.: +(202) 234-8494
 Web: <http://www.rtk.net>

Canada
National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI)
Environment Canada
 Ottawa
 Tel: +(819) 953-1656
 Fax: +(819) 994-3266
 Web: http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/npri/npri_home_e.cfm
 E-mail: npri@ec.gc.ca

Pollution Watch Scorecard
 Web: <http://www.pollutionwatch.org>

North America
North American PRTR Project
Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America (CEC)
 Montreal
 Tel.: +(514) 350-4300
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 Web: <http://www.cec.org>



This brochure was developed by a trinational Ad Hoc PRTR Group, composed of volunteers from business, academia, and civil society throughout North America who are interested in innovative uses of PRTRs. The Group operates under the auspices of the Consultative Group for the North American PRTR Project, with support from the CEC. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the CEC, or the governments of Mexico, Canada or the United States of America. For more information on this publication, please contact: Talli Nauman, Member of the Ad Hoc PRTR Group, TELFAX: +(524) 970-1593 e-mail: jaguar@infosel.net.mx

The Pollutant Release and Transfer Register

An Innovative Tool for Efficient Industry

Improves Efficiency of Production and Supports Decision Making

The Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR)

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PUBLIC REPORTING

... what industry leaders have to say about it

"[The register] has helped Vinings save money because we did have to go out and actually calculate what we were losing. We could determine we were losing such-and-such chemical. It's cost us time and aggravation and headaches, but in the long run it has saved us money."

Randy Hinton, *Vinings Industries, Marietta, Georgia, August 1991*

"Well designed emissions reporting provides useful information about current releases and the basis for designing new processes or modifying existing ones to result in emission reductions."

Gordon Lloyd, *Vice President, Vice President, Technical Affairs, Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, February 2001*

"I personally find a lot of benefit in reporting everything together, in having a database and an inventory."

Carlos Gaitán, *Safety, Health and Environment Manager, DuPont de México, November 2000*

"The initial demand for environmental reporting came from the public. But, in responding, we have discovered that the information is extremely useful to our own management. We have learned about our successes, our inadequacies and the gaps in our knowledge"

Ciba Geigy, *Corporate Environmental Report, 1993*

"From our company's point of view, [the register] helped us to discover a problem that we weren't even aware of. We discovered we had leaking sewers and potential contamination of our water supplies."

Richard Harding, *Eastman Gelatine, August 1990*

"We have no problem with the idea of mandatory reporting. Rather than affecting us, reporting benefits us, because it shows us as an example."

José Campos García, *Environmental Control and Energies Superintendent, Nissan Mexicana, November 2000*

...what the neighbors have to say

"The results of PRTR reporting have been: decreases in releases of chemicals such as benzene and toluene, both in the United States and Canada, and in many cases, improved relations between companies and communities. Companies gained a new potential efficiency measure. In a survey done by the state of Minnesota in the mid-1980s, 85 percent of facilities reporting subsequently use the data to measure process efficiency. Governments gained the potential of measuring impacts of [regulatory] initiatives."

Tom Natan, *National Environmental Trust, Washington, DC August 2001*

"A mandatory PRTR is critical to providing information that is useful to government agencies, legislative bodies and communities."

Wilma Subra, *Technical Advisor, Louisiana Environmental Network, August 2001*

"To date, information has not been available to the public on the kinds and volumes of dangerous substances that are utilized, applied, emitted or transferred [in Mexico]. Public access to this information has been demonstrated to be, in most cases, a highly effective incentive for prevention of pollution, avoiding illnesses, [and improving] planning and emergency responses. It's clear that to reap the fruits of the right to information, current limitations must be overcome."

Laura Durazo, *President, Proyecto Fronterizo para la Educación Ambiental, Tijuana, August 2001*

...the way authorities see it

"The US [Toxics Release Inventory] was immensely useful in convincing the state government, the public and industry to cooperatively reducing releases to the Louisiana environment. The reductions improved our citizen's health and quality of life, and they helped to attract new development to Louisiana. The PRTR resulted in one of those rare win-win situations."

Paul H. Templet, *Professor of Environmental Sciences at Louisiana State University and former Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, August 2001*

"We have free trade agreements with the United States and Canada, with Europe, so we must take upon ourselves this environmental issue [PRTR] that is very related to the industrial sector's modernization and productivity."

Victor Lichtinger, *Secretary, Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico, June 2001*

"Here in Canada, the National Pollutant Release Inventory provides Canadians with information on pollution releases from companies across Canada. The NPRI is part of our government's commitment to report to Canadians about the state of the environment in their communities, in their province and across the country."

David Anderson, *Minister, Environment Canada, June 2000*

"Information is power. Information gives America's families ability to make... decisions. We found out that the more information we have and make available about toxic releases, the more emissions have been reduced.."

Christine Todd Whitman, *Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency, April 2001*



International obligations call for PRTRs as a tool for informing stakeholders

The United Nations 1992 Earth Summit called for the establishment of PRTRs and public access to information.

A 1996 Council Recommendation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) calls on member countries to implement publicly available PRTRs. Eight OECD member countries now have public PRTRs, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, Korea, the Netherlands, the

Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, during its October 2000 meeting in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, recommended that countries without PRTRs institute them.

The 1998 Aarhus Convention of the Economic Commission for Europe requires signatory parties to take steps to establish PRTRs.

North America takes the lead in cooperative data tracking

Mexico, Canada and the United States have agreed to develop the world's first matched set of trinational data on pollution releases and transfers.

Through the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) PRTR project, the three countries are working together to improve comparability among their national reporting systems.

From 1995 through 2001, the CEC Council, composed of the top environment officials in the three North American countries, has issued a number of resolutions and statements calling for the establishment of comparable public pollution registers in Mexico, Canada and the United States.

The first country in North America to develop a register was the United States. Its Toxics Release Inventory was

initiated in 1987. Canadian facilities have been registering their discharges since 1993 in the National Pollutant Release Inventory. It is based on a system that chemical industry association members made mandatory for themselves.

Combining data from the two countries in its annual *Taking Stock* report, the CEC has been able to give a regional picture of the reductions over time in the 165 chemical pollutants

common to both national reporting systems. Comparable data for Mexico are not yet available.

Less than five percent of Mexican industrial sites currently inventory chemical emissions and transfers under Mexico's voluntary federal reporting system. The system was put in place in 1997 after a national consultation and a case study in the state of Querétaro, in which industry

associations, academics, civic groups and officials participated.

The results have led to the administration's current proposal for congressional reform of the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection to phase in mandatory, public reporting.