

North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation reports where 5 billion kg of industrial pollutants go annually

North American industrial facilities reported yearly releases and transfers of ~5 billion kg of pollutants, including ~335 million kg sent off site for disposal

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- A new report today from the [North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation](#) (CEC) compiles and analyzes data reported by approximately 24,000 industrial facilities in Canada, Mexico and the United States to their respective national pollutant release and transfer registers.

TAKING STOCK | Volume 16



North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers, Volume 16

With a feature analysis of off-site transfers to disposal

CEC Taking Stock report, Vol. 16

The report (at bit.ly/3LADtYu) reveals important gaps in the reporting and tracking of transfers to disposal across the region due to differing reporting requirements, shared responsibilities across agencies and jurisdictions, and the lack of information about the fate of waste pollutants when they are transferred to third parties (such as waste management service providers) or across national borders. The report also provides insights about the challenges facing facilities relative to implementing pollution prevention and sustainable production practices and offers examples of alternatives to the generation and disposal of industrial waste.

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Important data gaps across North America ... stem from differing national reporting requirements and from the transfer of responsibility for waste pollutants after they leave the source facility”

CEC Executive Director Jorge Daniel Taillant

Since 1995, the CEC has worked with governments, industry, civil society and academia through the North

American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) Initiative to promote and enhance access to comparable and complete PRTR data for the region to support decisions about

pollution prevention and sustainability. In parallel with the release of the [16th edition of Taking Stock](#), the CEC has launched the enhanced Taking Stock Online web portal featuring a searchable database and tools that allow researchers, decision-makers and the general public to explore the latest integrated North American PRTR data.

“In the spirit of the public’s right-to-know, Taking Stock presents and analyzes data on industrial pollutant releases and transfers to inform decisions about preventing pollution and advancing environmental justice by reducing the risk of exposure to contaminants of vulnerable communities,” said Jorge Daniel Taillant, CEC Executive Director.

“This report sheds light on important data gaps across North America that stem from differing national reporting requirements and from the transfer of responsibility for waste pollutants after they leave the source facility. These gaps in information about the quantities and management of substances can, for example, constrain our ability to respond to extreme events and disasters, such as floods, that risk re-mobilizing pollutants from disposal sites and contaminated soils. In the context of climate change, we must re-evaluate the ‘business as usual’ approach to the use of pollutants and the generation of hazardous waste.”

Key findings:

Almost 24,000 industrial facilities across North America reported more than 5 billion kilograms (kg) in pollutant releases and transfers each year. The distribution among release and transfer types is roughly as follows (average of 5 years):

Release or Transfer Category % of total

- * On-Site Air Emissions: 7%
- * On-Site Surface Water Discharges: 4%
- * On-Site Underground Injection: 5%
- * On-Site Disposal or Land Releases: 41%
- * Off-site Transfers to Recycling: 26%
- * Off-site Transfers to Treatment, sewage, energy recovery: 10%
- * Off-site Transfers to Disposal: 6%

Together, about fifteen industry sectors accounted for 80% of the reported annual totals – including metal ore mining, iron and steel mills/ferroalloy manufacturing, basic chemicals manufacturing, oil and gas extraction, and waste management. Similarly, of the more than 500 pollutants reported, approximately 20 accounted for 88% of annual releases and transfers. Just five of them—zinc, manganese, lead, and copper compounds, along with nitric acid/nitrate compounds—together accounted for about 45% of the total.

The report’s special analysis of off-site transfers to disposal reveals that approximately 11,000

facilities, many of them in these same top sectors, reported transferring about 335 million kg of their waste pollutants to disposal (representing 6% of total annual releases and transfers). The top pollutants – metal compounds such as zinc, manganese, lead and barium, along with hydrogen sulfide – accounted for about 55% of the total.

The report provides examples of the health and environmental issues associated with common industrial disposal practices such as landfills or surface impoundments, underground injection, land application, and “other” disposal. It also reveals important gaps in the data that result from differences among PRTR reporting requirements across the region, as well as the shared responsibility for the reporting and management of hazardous waste. These gaps impede our ability to track pollutant transfers from their source to their ultimate disposition, particularly when they involve third-party contractors or when waste pollutants cross national borders.

A key objective of the CEC’s North American PRTR Initiative is to support pollution prevention and sustainability within industry. This edition of Taking Stock provides information and examples of alternatives to the generation and disposal of industrial waste and shows how PRTRs can serve as important tools to support the transition from a linear to a circular economy, for instance, by calling for detailed reporting of facilities’ pollution prevention efforts, needs and challenges that can yield insights for industry and governments.

About the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Initiative

The CEC’s North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (NAPRTR) Initiative promotes public access to data and information reported by industrial facilities in North America to improve understanding of the sources and management of pollutants of concern across the region and support decisions relative to pollution prevention and sustainability.

Since 1996, the NAPRTR Initiative has been a cornerstone of the CEC’s work on pollutants and environmental health. Efforts are focused on adding value to national PRTR data through their integration, analysis and dissemination via the Taking Stock report series and the Taking Stock Online website featuring a searchable database and tools. Data are reported by industrial facilities to the three national PRTRs in North America: Canada’s National Pollutant Release Inventory; Mexico’s Registro de Emisiones y Transferencia de Contaminantes; and the United States’ Toxics Release Inventory.

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Key finding in full: <https://bit.ly/3AJbEXQ>

Full report: bit.ly/3LADtYu

News release in

French: bit.ly/3VbrWII

Spanish: bit.ly/3L61Eg8

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