OFFICE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

MAY 1 9 2004

Dear TRI Reporter:

I would like to inform you of some important developments in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Program. As part of an ongoing effort to modernize and streamline the program, we are embarking on a series of efforts to ensure EPA receives the highest quality data and reduces costs while providing the public with access to TRI data and information products earlier. Only with your support and cooperation can we successfully implement these changes and save resources, both yours and ours.

***Internet Reporting:*** Most important, my aim is to modernize the TRI reporting process by processing all reporting forms electronically. EPA has made key investments to make this a reality and I ask that each facility take full advantage of available electronic reporting with the use of the TRI Made Easy (*TRI-ME*) software and EPA's Central Data Exchange (CDX). I urge you to take another look at this secure reporting pathway as a way to save time and money and to provide you ample time to review your data before it is released to the public. If every TRI form were submitted through CDX, we could save taxpayers 1.5 million dollars.

***Early Data Release:*** This year we intend to provide the public with an Electronic Facility Data Release (eFDR) in November. The eFDR will enable the public to access TRI data on a facility-specific, form-by-form level on or about November 30, 2004, via EPA's Envirofacts Web site. The fall release enables the public to get an early glimpse of the TRI data on a form-by-form basis, but users will be unable to view aggregate release amounts or aggregate amounts of other waste management quantities due to the presentation of the data (on a form-by-form basis). The eFDR will be made available to the public via the EPA Envirofacts Web site (http://www.epa.gov/enviro) after a series of quality review steps are completed.

In order to allow enough time for facilities to correct any errors prior to the eFDR in November it is very important for all reporters to report electronically–online via CDX. By reporting electronically, TRI facilities will be certain to receive Facility Data Profiles (FDP) with ample time to send EPA any appropriate corrections by November 1, 2004. Any revisions received by the EPA TRI Program on or before November 1, 2004, will be captured and displayed in the public eFDR.

**Data Quality:** While EPA will be instituting additional modernizations to the *TRI-ME* software and FDP to automate data quality checks, the annual FDP process will now become the sole opportunity for the regulated community to re-check data they have submitted to EPA. I believe that TRI data submitted to EPA by the reporting deadline should be right the first time. EPA can no longer provide a series of costly opportunities for facility feedback on their own submissions. I ask that you review your FDP carefully since it is our goal to no longer process any revisions following November 1 each year. In the event that facilities note significant errors following the FDP process, those errors will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but I cannot guarantee that any such corrections will be reflected in the annual PDR.

This streamlined data quality process further emphasizes the value of electronic reporting via CDX. Only by reporting via CDX will facilities maximize the time available for review of data they have previously submitted. Starting this year, all incoming facility reports will be processed following the FDP window in order to release the new eFDR in November of each year. We will reinvest savings in helpful tools and automated data checks to assist facilities and in greater electronic means of accessing TRI data.

I invite you to read the enclosure to learn about additional activities underway at EPA to modernize and re-engineer the TRI Program. As you can see, we have outlined an ambitious effort. I believe these changes emphasize our capabilities as a leader in community right-to-know in an electronic era. The involvement of our stakeholders in this process over the next year is critical to the modernization effort.

I look forward to implementing these plans with your assistance and thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to the TRI Program as we strive to continue to provide the public important information about releases and other waste management of toxic chemicals within U.S. communities. For additional information on the TRI Program, please visit our Web site at http://www.epa.gov/tri. If you have any questions, please contact the TRI Program via e-mail at tri.us@epa.gov or by phone at 202-566-0250.

Sincerely,

Kimberly T. Nelson,
Assistant Administrator and
Chief Information Officer

Enclosure

# EPA Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Program Re-Engineering Goals
*Continued progress on program modernization to reduce costs and burdens while providing the public with new and redesigned information products*

## TRI Reporting Activities

### *Limiting Paper and Improving Quality with Greater Use of TRI-ME Software*
- *TRI-ME* and the EPA Central Data Exchange (CDX) - For RY2003, EPA aims to have 50% of TRI chemical forms submitted over the internet using *TRI-ME* and CDX.
- *TRI-ME* - EPA will begin development of web-based *TRI-ME* software in FY04, with enhanced error logic and a new live interaction capability with the system of registries.

### *Streamlining Reporting Channels*
- State Node Exchange - EPA will begin work to conduct a pilot that will enable States to pull TRI information via the CDX State Node Exchange Network. This is the first step toward simultaneous submission of TRI forms to both EPA and states, and could eliminate the need for duplicate submissions.

### *Taking Further Steps to Ensure Data Accuracy*
- Facility Data Profile (FDP) Enhancements -Beginning with the RY2003 FDP, the TRI Program will be providing facilities with "Data Quality Alerts" notifying them of possible issues with their 2003 submissions. As in RY 2002, the TRI Program will encourage use of *TRI-ME* and CDX to make corrections via the internet.

### *Examining New Ways to Reduce Program Burden*
- Burden Reduction Proposed Rule - After careful review of input received during the Stakeholder Dialogue, EPA will develop a rule proposal in early 2005 to reduce costs and burdens for the reporting community while maintaining the practical utility of the TRI data.

## TRI Information Activities

### *Getting TRI Data Out faster*
- Electronic Facility Data Release (eFDR) - TRI Program will release RY2003 data on a facility basis by November of 2004 via the EPA Envirofacts Web site.

### *Enhancing the Context and Utility of TRI Data*
- Redesigned Annual Public Data Release (PDR) -The RY2002 PDR redesign will include a mix of paper and e-products, including a streamlined PDR Report containing national TRI Statistics. TRI Explorer will be enhanced to provide users with access to electronic National and State Fact Sheets. Another new feature allows users to create reports on federal facility data.