



Australian Government
Department of the Environment and Heritage

NPI Update



October - November 2005

Issue 8

Welcome to the October - November 2005 edition of the National Pollutant Inventory Update newsletter.

The National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) provides information on the web about pollutant emissions from industrial facilities and diffuse sources, their possible impact and what you can do to decrease emissions.

The NPI is a cooperative programme implemented by the Australian, state and territory governments.

This newsletter informs the community, industry and government about NPI issues such as upcoming events and the progress of the NPI review.

[Find out more about this and earlier NPI newsletters.](#)

The NPI newsletter will only be available electronically and notification of its publication on the web will be provided by DEH's weekly 'Environment News' email.

[Subscribe to this email service through the DEH web site.](#)

The NPI helps everyone keep an eye on pollution – it's your right to know.

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If you have any feedback or comments about the NPI contact the Department of the Environment and Heritage or the relevant state or territory agency. Contact details are at the end of the newsletter.



www.npi.gov.au



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NPI review and NPI NEPM variation

NPI review report

Individuals and organisations were invited to comment on the content of a report about the review of the NPI. Comments were received by the Department of the Environment and Heritage with the public consultation period closing on 30 August 2005.

Thirty submissions were received from individuals and organisations including companies, industry associations, environment and community groups and governments. Most of the comments received were in relation to the two proposed key policy changes to be included in the scope of the NPI National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) variation process - transfers and greenhouse gases. The National Environment Protection Council will provide a response to the submissions later in the year.

NPI NEPM variation

A cross-jurisdictional project team is working on the NPI NEPM variation process, and has had two meetings to date. The project team is considering the suggestions in the public submissions, and providing feedback to the original review team in order to "close the loop" on the review process.

The Technical Advisory Panel which held an initial meeting in October, will be convened to review the NPI substance list.

A draft NPI NEPM variation will be available for public consultation in 2006.

Further information on the review process can be obtained from Ms Debbie Lawrence on (02) 6274 2179, or email npi@deh.gov.au, or visit [NPI review and NEPM variation](#).

Reporting to the NPI

Most reporting facilities should have provided information on the 2004-05 reporting period to their state or territory environment agency by 30 September 2005.

In 2003-04, 3629 facilities from a wide range of industry sectors reported to the NPI.

How can industry use their NPI data?

Industry can use NPI data to improve manufacturing processes, and can benchmark their emissions against similar facilities. NPI reporting requires a company to assess all of its inputs and outputs. When industry has a better understanding of its processes and where improvements can be made, it can help them to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Annual reporting also assists industry in documenting progress in reducing emissions. One of the main goals of the NPI is to encourage facilities to use cleaner production techniques to reduce pollutant emissions and create a cleaner, healthier environment. The NPI helps industry to show the community what cleaner production activities and pollution control developments they have undertaken during the reporting year.

Key dates

30 November 2005 - state and territory environment agencies review all NPI reports for accuracy and forward the data to the Australian Government by this date.

31 January 2006 - 2004-05 facility data is published on the NPI web site for the 7th reporting year.



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All about arsenic

The NPI database can give you information on the amounts and sources of substances emitted in your area. One of these is arsenic. Arsenic and its compounds are one of the 90 NPI substances. In the 2003-04 NPI reporting year it was estimated that about 160 000kg of arsenic was emitted from industrial facilities and diffuse sources in Australia.

The major industry sources of arsenic and compounds reported to the NPI are metal ore mining, basic non-ferrous metal manufacturing and electricity supply. The major diffuse sources of this substance are paved/unpaved roads and aeroplanes.

Arsenic and compounds are emitted mainly to air, although there are also some emissions to land and water.

Arsenic and its compounds are poisonous. This substance is used in pesticides, weed killers, wood preservatives and various alloys. The burning of treated wood is of particular community concern, as the smoke may contain dangerous amounts of arsenic compounds and other chemicals used to treat the wood (such as chromium (VI) and copper compounds).



Arsenic treated wood can be found in children's playgrounds.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has recommended the phase-out of arsenic timber treatments from use in children's playgrounds, outdoor furniture, decking and handrails from March 2006. Consumers should be aware of alternatives before choosing wood products for home renovations and outdoor furniture – [more about APVMA arsenic timber treatments.](#)

King George III and Napoleon Bonaparte were reputed to have suffered from arsenic's deadly effects. As arsenic is odourless, tasteless and difficult to detect, it was frequently used as a murder weapon, and became known as the 'poison of kings and the king of poisons'.

In 1997, approximately 400 substances were considered for inclusion on the NPI reporting list. A ranking and total hazard score was given based on health and environmental hazards and human and environmental exposure to the substance. Arsenic and compounds was ranked as 10 out of 400, on a scale where one represents the highest risk to human and environmental health.

Fact sheets are available for all of the 90 NPI substances – [more about arsenic and compounds](#)



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Walk to work day

Did you walk to work on October 7 instead of driving your car?

If you did, you were helping the environment by reducing vehicle exhaust emissions. Vehicles make a major contribution to air pollution in urban areas by emitting substances that are harmful to our environment and our health.

Emissions from cars are greatest when the engine is cold. For the first couple of minutes of a car trip the engine is cold and this will result in an increase of fuel consumption per kilometre. On a cold day a petrol car may take up to 10km to warm up and operate at maximum efficiency.

One of the best ways you can help to reduce air pollution is to leave the car at home for short trips and walk instead. Walking and cycling are sustainable travel choices with the added benefit of improving your health.

Find out more about becoming Travel Smart by visiting <http://www.travelsmart.gov.au>.

Another way to help protect our air quality is to understand the sources of air pollution in our communities. The NPI contains information on the emissions of substances from business and industry in Australia. [More about the NPI](#)

There is information on the NPI web site about [what industry, government and you can do to help reduce pollution](#).

NPI database tool

If you want to create a spreadsheet of NPI data, try the 'download spreadsheet' option.

This tool allows you to download emission data in a form suitable for loading into a spreadsheet or database. For example, you can download all emissions to water from reporting facilities for the 2003-04 reporting year. Just follow these steps:

Select download facility emission data on the [download data by spreadsheet page](#)

Select an NPI reporting year – 2003-04.

Select a jurisdiction – all jurisdictions.

Select a substance – all substances or a particular substance.

Select an industry category – all groups or all classes.

Select an emission destination – emissions to water.

Only facility data will be included. A spreadsheet (in Microsoft Excel format) will be generated which contains all emissions for the selected facilities. This will be displayed through your browser. You can save this spreadsheet for further analysis.

You can also obtain spreadsheets for air shed and water catchment emission data. Only diffuse emissions will be included in these spreadsheets.

If you prefer to have the data sent to you, you can enter your email address and choose a data format.

The file will be sent as a zipped attachment to the email message.





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International – What is a PRTR?

A Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) is a public database of releases and transfers of potentially harmful chemicals. A typical PRTR covers releases to air, water and land as well as wastes transported to treatment and disposal sites. In addition to collecting data from point sources such as factories and mining facilities, some PRTRs are designed to include estimates of emissions from diffuse sources such as agricultural and transport activities. There are some PRTRs that do not include transfers, such as Australia's NPI. Transfers are being considered for inclusion in the current NEPM variation process.

Many governments around the world use this tool to satisfy community concerns about chemicals in the environment, and this was the main driver for establishing the NPI in Australia. The community right to know was the priority in the 1996 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommendation that all OECD member countries provide public access to information concerning pollutant releases and transfers from various sources.

Possible applications of PRTR information include mapping the data to display the proximity of pollution sources to population centres or to ecologically sensitive areas, as a

way of highlighting potential health or environmental impacts. Trends in the data can reveal the progress being made by individual facilities or industrial sectors in reducing waste and minimising pollution, or for identifying opportunities for improvement.

Some examples of international PRTRs:

[Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory](#)

[United States' Toxic Release Inventory](#)

[United Kingdom's UK Pollution Inventory](#)

There are links to more PRTRs and international agencies on the NPI web site. The OECD has developed a PRTR Resource Centre under the lead of Environment Canada, which provides a clearing house of guidance manuals and documents relating to release estimation techniques. You can find it at [Resource Centre for PRTR Release Estimation Techniques \(RETs\)](#).

NPI Contacts

If you wish to contact NPI Units in the states or territories, the NPI contact details are available on the web.

[Full current NPI contact details](#)

Contact the NPI unit at the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage:

Phone: 1800 657 945

Email: npi@deh.gov.au

Web Site: <http://www.npi.gov.au/>

