

COALITION OF  
**JOURNALISTS FOR  
OPEN GOVERNMENT**

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Office of Environmental Information (OEI) Docket  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
*Submitted via Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>*  
Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-TRI-2005-0073.

The Coalition of Journalists for Open Government and the undersigned member organizations join in support of the comments of the Society of Environmental Journalists and its petition to the Environmental Protection Agency to abandon its ill-conceived revision of Toxics Release Inventory procedures.

These regulations, adopted in the wake of a tragic 1984 chemical disaster have provided much-needed accountability index for nearly two decades, one that has kept the public informed on the use of toxic chemicals in their communities and has at the same time led to significant reductions in the release of toxic chemicals into the atmosphere, our waters and the soil.

No doubt the preparation of these reports can seem a burden to members of our industrial communities. But is it really an unreasonable burden? Most responsible industries already collect such information for their own purposes -- in order to assure product and employee safety, to track inventory and sales, to meet other permit requirements, and to protect themselves against legal liability. Moreover, we believe the collection of the data would be critical to any company that was sincere in honoring the implicit compact it has with its neighbors and community to ensure it will not jeopardize their safety.

Until the Environmental Protection Agency can absolutely assure the American people that the use, handling or manufacture below the threshold quantity level of any particular chemical poses no environmental or personal danger, we believe the public has a right to know the extent of that use, however minimal it may appear. And it should not allow companies to go for as much as 24 months without making public any excessive release of toxic materials.

We join the Society of Environmental Journalists in urging the EPA not to loosen the chemical quantity reporting thresholds and to withdraw its proposal to extend the TRI reporting to every other year.

Pete Weitzel, for the  
Coalition of Journalists for Open Government, and the  
American Society of Newspaper Editors  
Associated Press Managing Editors  
Association of Alternative Newsweeklies  
National Freedom of Information Coalition  
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press  
Society of Professional Journalists

