♽EPA An Overview of ERNS

Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) Fact Sheet

Office of Emergency and Remedial Response
Emergency Response Division 5202G

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

What is ERNS?

The Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) is a database used to store information on notifications of oil discharges and hazardous substances releases. The ERNS program is a cooperative data sharing effort among the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Headquarters, the Department of Transportation Research and Special Programs Administration's (RSPA) John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, other DOT program offices, the ten EPA Regions, and the National Response Center (NRC). EPA Headquarters manages and provides significant funding for ERNS, and RSPA provides operation and maintenance support through an interagency agreement with EPA. ERNS provides the most comprehensive data compiled on notifications of oil discharges and hazardous substance releases in the United States. Since its inception in 1986, more than 275,000 release notifications have been entered into ERNS.

Release Notifications in ERNS

The types of release reports that are available in ERNS fall into three major categories: substances designated as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), as amended; oil and petroleum products, as defined by the Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA), as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990; and all other types of materials.

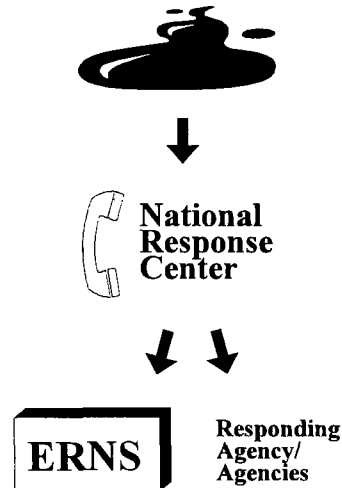| Notification Type	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
CERCLA	4,541	5,176	6,865	6,555	6,801	7,181	7,301	7,656
Oil & Petroleum	15,344	15,363	17,039	19,937	20,475	21,011	21,512	23,308
Other	6,646	7,922	9,427	7,693	8,205	7,473	8,298	8,546
Total for Year	26,531	28,461	33,331	34,185	35,481	35,665	37,111	39,510

Note: Numbers are based on initial notifications to the Federal government and are subject to change.

Data Limitations

Because ERNS is a database of initial notifications and not incidents, there are several limitations to the data. ERNS primarily contains initial accounts of releases, made during or immediately after a release occurs when exact details are often unknown. The data are usually not updated unless an EPA Region is involved in the response action. There may be multiple reports for a single incident, (this occurs when the caller makes a second report to update original data or a private observer reports a release that has already been reported by the facility). Because reports are taken over the phone, transcription errors (e.g., misspellings of discharger or location information), occasionally limit the quality of some data.

How Are Notifications Collected in ERNS?

When a call is made to the NRC or one of the ten EPA Regions, a report is created containing all of the release information that the caller provided. The data usually include information about the material and the quantity released, the discharger, and the location of the release. This report is transferred to an appropriate agency which evaluates the need for a response, and once daily all records are electronically transferred to the ERNS data base. In addition, each of the EPA Regions can update ERNS records if additional information becomes available after the initial notification. However, if a caller makes an additional report to update previous data, a second record is created and transferred to the ERNS data base.

National Response Center

ERNS — Responding Agency/ Agencies

Examples of Responding Agencies:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- United States Coast Guard (USCG)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)
- State Emergency Response Commission (SERC)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
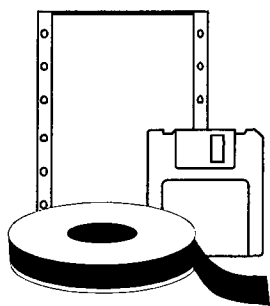- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

What Types of ERNS Data Outputs are Available?

ERNS data are available in various forms. The cost of obtaining ERNS data is determined based on the medium used and the time and effort expended to fill the request. Data can either be delivered via First Class Mail or e-mail through the Internet. General descriptions of the information formats are provided below:

Summary Release Information: These reports in table format offer a broad overview of data and are useful for analyzing trends in chemical and oil releases, or comparing groups (e.g., total release reports involving crude oil by year).

Standard ERNS Reports: These reports are either dBASE^2 files or one page reports in various wordprocessing formats containing information about specific release notifications. This format is best for providing information on a small subset of data, such as notifications from a particular geographical region, on a specific chemical, or about an individual site.

ERNS database: This is recommended for requestors who have extensive needs for ERNS data. The database is available two ways, (1) all data by year which is available on magnetic data tapes from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), or (2) data for each EPA Region by year which may be downloaded from EPA via the Internet, direct dial-in, or FedWorld. The magnetic data tapes may be purchased from NTIS in Springfield, VA at (703) 487-4650. Information on downloading data may be obtained by calling the ERNS Information

What Information is Available in ERNS?

ERNS contains, in addition to other data, information about the material and the quantity released, where the release occurred, when the release occurred, what agencies have been notified, and any information about property damage, injuries, and deaths occurring due to the release. In addition, when analyzing ERNS data, it is always important to consider that the information is typically based on the initial notification reported to a number of government agencies. Therefore, especially with historic data, there may be inconsistencies in the data because of different methods of data entry.

Why Report Releases to ERNS?

There are four primary Federal statutes that require release reporting including CERCLA, the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA), the Hazardous Material Transportation Act of 1974 (HMTA), and the CWA. In addition, because CERCLA defines hazardous substances to include CWA hazardous substances and toxic pollutants, the Clean Air Act hazardous air pollutants, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act hazardous wastes, and the Toxic Substances Control Act imminently hazardous chemical substances, releases of these substances are also subject to CERCLA reporting requirements. Part or all of the information from these reports may be collected in ERNS. The four primary statutes and their resulting regulations, citations, and relationship to ERNS are shown in the table below.

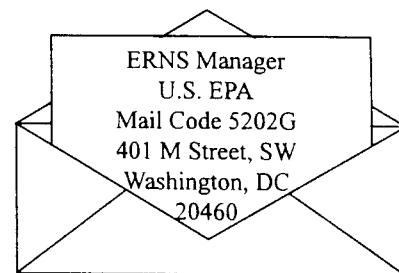|	Cite for Reporting Requirements	
CERCLA Section 103	40 CFR Part 302.6 Part 300.405	Requires that the release of a CERCLA hazardous substance that meets or exceeds the reportable quantity (RQ) set forth in 40 CFR 302.4 must be reported to the NRC. These substances account for
EPCRA Section 304	40 CFR Part 355.40	Requires that the release of an RQ or more of an EPCRA extremely hazardous substance or a CERCLA hazardous substance (one pound or more if a reporting trigger is not established by regulation) that results in exposure of people outside the facility boundary be reported to State and
HMTA Section 1808	49 CFR Part 171.15	Requires that the release of a DOT hazardous material during transportation be reported to the NRC under certain circumstances such as death, injury, significant property damage, evacuation, highway
CWA Section 311	40 CFR Part 110.10 40 CFR Part 300.300 Part 110.10	Requires that the release of oil be reported to the NRC if the release: (1) violates applicable water quality standards; (2) causes a film, sheen or discoloration of the water or adjoining shoreline; or (3) causes a sludge or an emulsion to be deposited beneath the surface of the water or upon the

What is ERNS Used For?

The primary purpose of ERNS is to standardize and collect notifications made to the Federal government of releases of oil and hazardous substances. These notifications are used by On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) to determine an appropriate Federal response action, and to assist decision makers in solving emergency response and release prevention issues. ERNS data are also used to support other EPA programs. Specific examples of ERNS data applications include:

- Guidance and Regulatory Development
- Responses to Congressional Inquiries
- Response Preparedness
- Compliance and Enforcement Support
- Environmental Planning
- Statistical and Trend Analysis
- Academic Research
- Property Transfer/Site Audits

How Can ERNS Data Be Obtained?

Information on the ERNS database may be obtained by calling the ERNS Information Line at (202) 260-2342, by sending an e-mail request to erns.info@epamail.epa.gov, by contacting the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer in the specific EPA Region of interest, or by contacting EPA at the following address. Addresses and telephone numbers of the EPA Regional FOIA offices are provided on page 4.

ERNS Manager
U.S. EPA
Mail Code 5202G
401 M Street, SW
Washington, DC
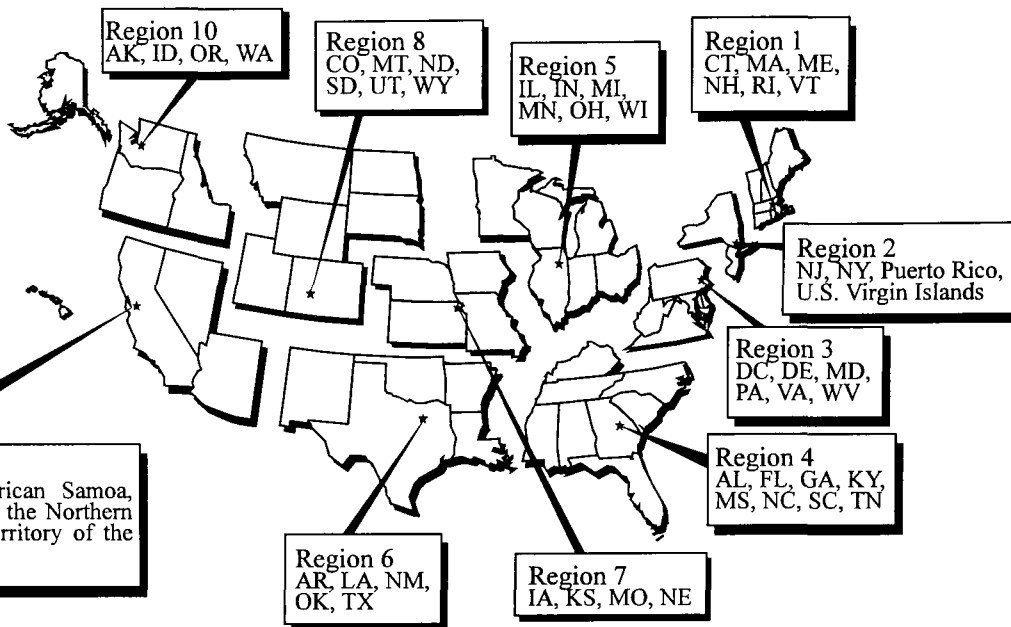20460

Regional Contacts for ERNS Information

U.S. EPA Region 1
Freedom of Information Act Office
JFK Federal Building (REA)
Boston, MA 02203

U.S. EPA Region 2
Freedom of Information Act Office
Office of External Programs
26 Federal Plaza, Room 905
New York, NY 10278

Region 10
AK, ID, OR, WA

Region 8
CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY

Region 5
IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI

Region 1
CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT

Region 2
NJ, NY, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands

Region 3
DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV

Region 9
AZ, CA, HI, NV, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

Region 4
AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN

Region 6
AR, LA, NM, OK, TX

Region 7
IA, KS, MO, NE

U.S. EPA Region 3
Freedom of Information Act Office
(3EA10)
841 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

U.S. EPA Region 4
Freedom of Information Act Office
345 Courtland Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30365

U.S. EPA Region 5
Freedom of Information Act Office
(MI-13J)
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604

U.S. EPA Region 6
Freedom of Information Act Office
(6M-ASC)
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

U.S. EPA Region 7
Freedom of Information Act Office
726 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101

U.S. EPA Region 8
Freedom of Information Act Office
(80EA)
999 18th Street, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202-2405

U.S. EPA Region 9
Freedom of Information Act Office (E-2)
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 744-1586

U.S. EPA Region 10
Freedom of Information Act Office
(SO-086)
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

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Environmental Protection
Agency (OS-120)
Washington, DC 20460

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