

Analytical Overview:

A Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) provides important information about whether facilities are obeying the standards that limit releases into air and water. As illustrated on the map, Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway, South Korea, United Kingdom, and the United States have an operating PRTR. Mexico and many countries in Europe have taken steps toward establishing a PRTR. The attention to PRTRs in these countries reflects a growing interest worldwide in promoting greater corporate environmental accountability at the facility level. It also illustrates the role of international agreements and collaboration on access to specific types of information, such as information about facility performance.

Description:

A PRTR, known internationally as a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register, is a government-operated system that collects and disseminates data on environmental releases and transfers of toxic chemicals from industrial facilities. The map above illustrates the status of the development of PRTRs worldwide. The data for the map was collected by national teams which investigated whether there were laws requiring public access to facility compliance reports and PRTRs. With access to this information, citizens can trace facilities' progress in reducing or avoiding pollution.

* A full PRTR also includes information transfers of substances in waste. Australia, Norway, and the United Kingdom, for example, do not now provide transfer data or provide it in a limited form. Japan's first data are expected in spring of 2003.

** Mexico is writing regulations to implement a 2002 law requiring facilities to report PRTR data and for the information to be made public. Hungary has a law mandating the creation of a PRTR. Denmark, Italy and Slovakia now provide some public data on release in one or two environmental media. Sweden has pilot-tested a PRTR system. All members of the European Union are included in this category because the EU requires members to submit facility release data on 50 pollutants to air and/or water by June 2003.

*** Interest is indicated, for instance, by regular participation in the Working Group on PRTR Protocol under the Aarhus Convention, or by working with an international organization through a workshop or other process.