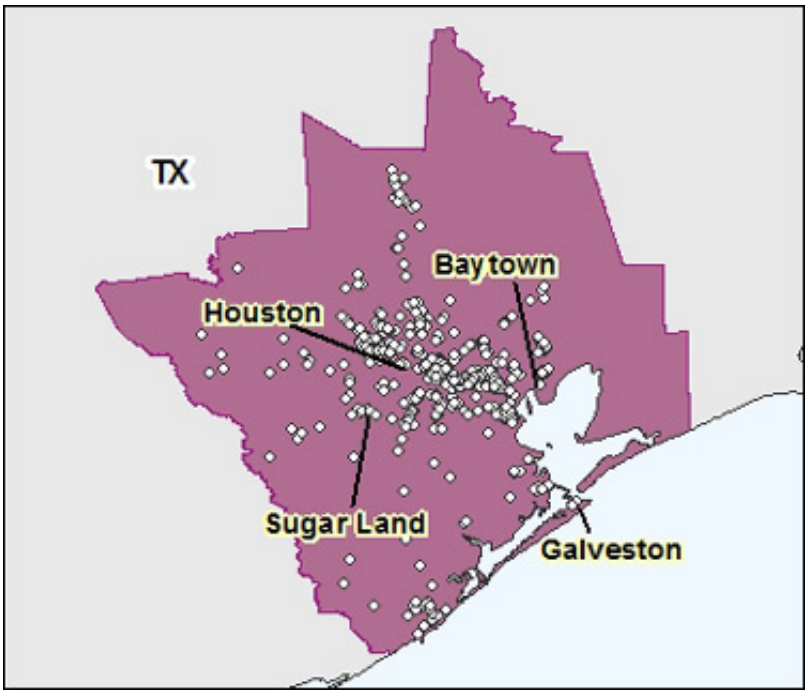
Menu

Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Program

2011 TRI National Analysis: Urban Communities - Greater Houston Area



TRI facilities in Greater Houston Area

Quick Facts for 2011

Number of TRI Facilities:	**492**
Total On-site and Off-site Disposal or Other Releases:	**81.8 million lb**
Total On-site:	**75.2 million lb**
• Air:	**20.2 million lb**
• Water:	**6.5 million lb**
• Land:	**4.8 million lb**
• Underground Injection:	**43.9 million lb**
Total Off-site:	**6.6 million lb**

View definitions of TRI terms

The Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown metropolitan statistical area is a 10-county urban community located along the Gulf Coast region in southeast Texas. The metropolitan area is often referred to as Greater Houston. It is the fifth largest metropolitan area in the United States, with a population of 6.1 million. The metropolitan area is one of the largest in size, covering 10,062 square miles, which is only slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts. Much of the metropolitan area was built on forested land, marshes, swamp, or prairie.

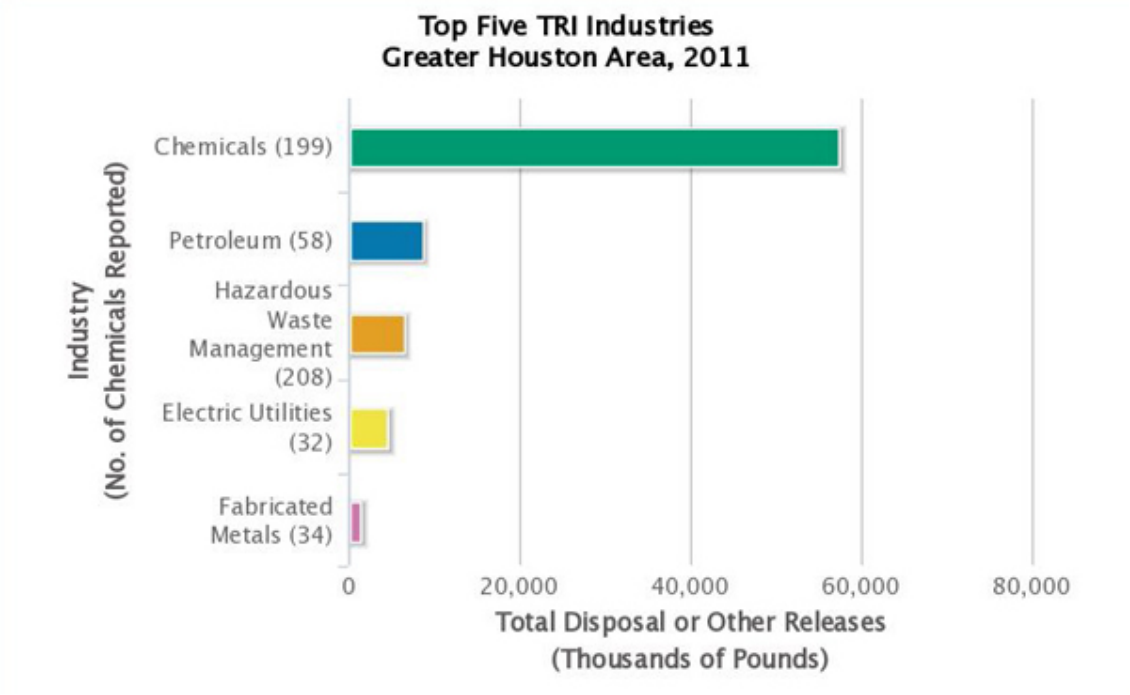
Galveston Bay is a large and productive estuary located within the Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown metropolitan area, supporting a substantial commercial fishing industry. Numerous bayous, rivers, and wetlands ring the Bay and support their own ecosystems.

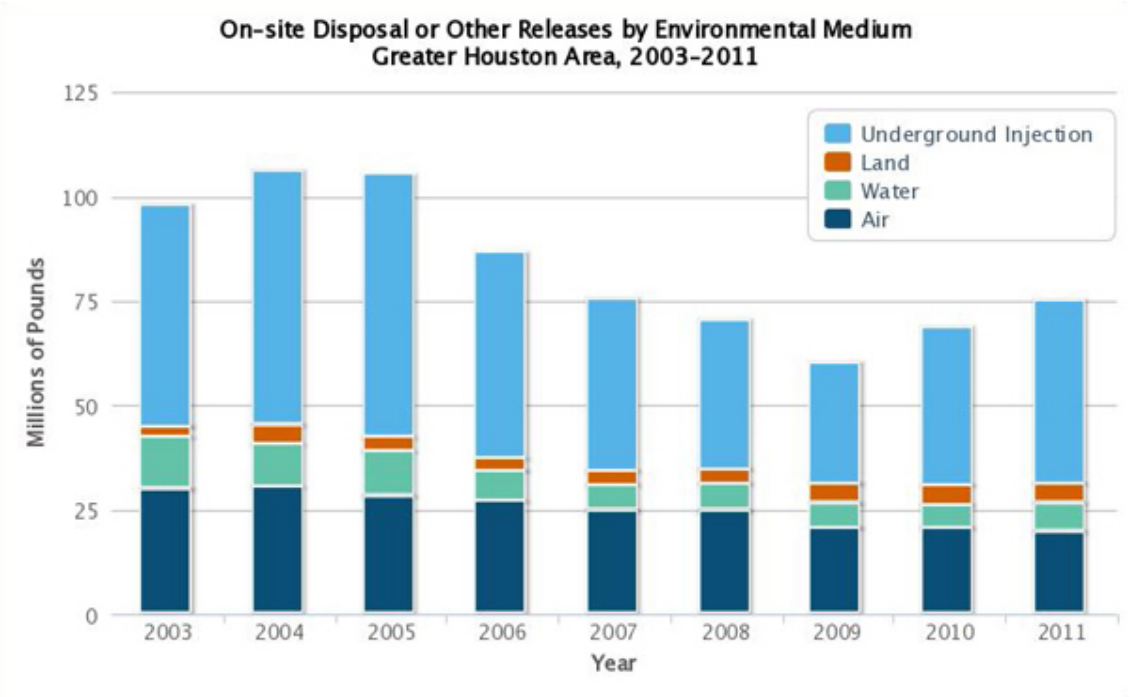
Much of the economic activity within the metropolitan area is based on shipping and manufacturing. According to the Greater Houston Partnership, an organization advocating for regional businesses, Galveston Bay and the Buffalo Bayou together form one of the most important shipping hubs in the world. The area is also home to the largest petrochemical manufacturing region in the United States, as well as major production facilities for sugar, synthetic rubber, fertilizers, insecticides, aeronautics, and oilfield equipment.

Chemical manufacturers had the largest total disposal or other releases in the Greater Houston metropolitan area. They accounted for 71% of the total on-site disposal or other releases. They also had the largest underground injection (with 84% of the total), air releases (with 66% of the total), and surface water discharges (with 49% of the total). From this sector, ammonia accounted for 31% of underground injection, ethylene and propylene accounted for 44% of total air releases, and nitrate compounds accounted for 91% of its surface water discharges. One inorganic chemical manufacturer reported 50% of the total underground injection in this area. Electric utilities had the largest on-site land disposal or other releases with 83% of the total, mainly composed of barium and its compounds.

Total on-site disposal or other releases decreased by 24% from 2003 to 2011, but increased by 9% from 2010 to 2011, primarily due to a 15% increase in underground injection. Surface water discharges also increased, by 22%, but air releases decreased, by 4% from 2010 to 2011. The chemical manufacturing sector had an increase of 4% in on-site disposal or other releases from 2010 to 2011, including an increase of 9% in underground injection. The petroleum refining sector had an increase of 9% from 2010 to 2011 in total on-site disposal or other releases. Electric utilities showed an increase of 8%. Hazardous waste management facilities reported an increase of 93% from 2010 to 2011, primarily driven by an increase in on-site underground injection at one facility.

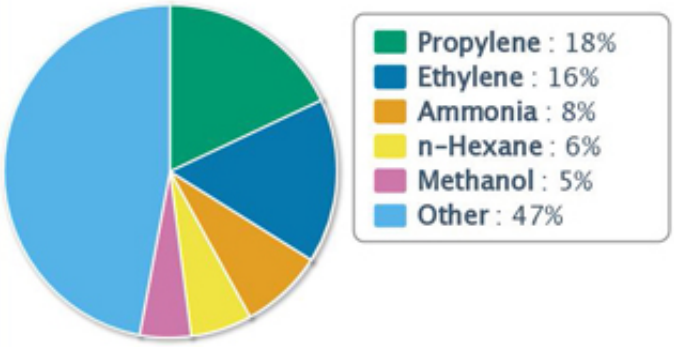
TRI National Analysis Geo-Specific Tables (Excel files)



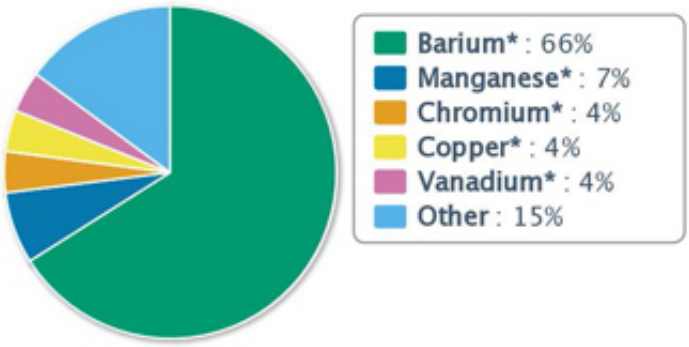


Top Five Chemicals by Environmental Medium Greater Houston Area, 2011

Air
20.0 million pounds

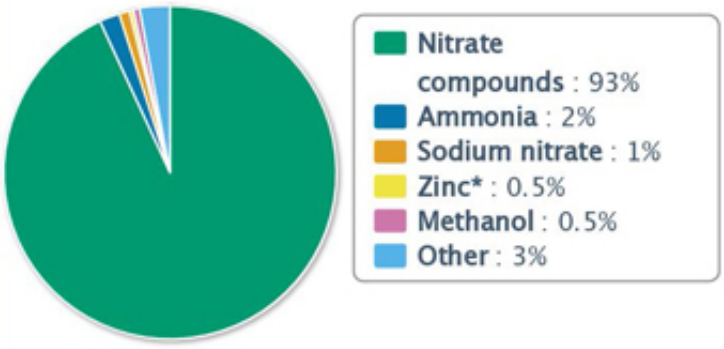


Land
4.8 million pounds



* and its compounds

Water
6.5 million pounds



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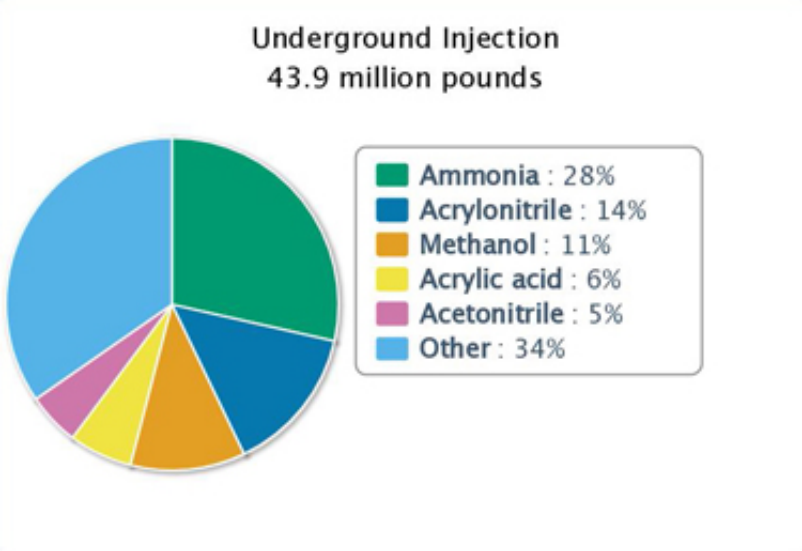

Note: This page was published in January of 2013 and uses the TRI National Analysis dataset made public in TRI Explorer in November 2012.

Last updated on March 16, 2014