

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

# Plan to Improve Public Access to Regulatory Compliance Information

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# EPA's Plan to Improve Public Access to Regulatory and Compliance Information



As part of President Obama's commitment to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in government, the President asked agencies to enhance public access to regulatory compliance and enforcement information in a [January 18, 2011 memoranda on Regulatory Compliance](#). President Obama noted that some agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have already begun to disclose this information online, citing EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) tool.

This document presents EPA's plan to increase and improve public access to compliance and enforcement information, with a focus on making this information accessible, downloadable and searchable online.

## I. Data Currently Available

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The Agency has published the following compliance and enforcement data and related information resources. These resources are either available via Data.gov or are in the process of being added to Data.gov at the time of this plan.

### A. Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO)

The [Enforcement and Compliance History Online \(ECHO\) tool](#) allows the public to get information about the compliance record of larger facilities. ECHO provides:

- Fast, integrated searches of EPA and state data for 800,000+ regulated facilities.
- Integrated inspection, violation, and enforcement for the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and hazardous waste laws.
- Toxics Release Inventory data, National Emissions Inventory data, and Water Quality Data.

EPA's [ECHO widget](#) allows you to search for compliance information within a specified zip code.

### B. Consent Decrees (Cases and Settlements)

EPA's [Consent Decrees resource](#) provides access to selected cases and settlements resolving civil enforcement cases and some complaints filed initiating civil judicial and administrative enforcement actions. This is not a complete repository of all enforcement actions taken by or on behalf of EPA. It is a subset of enforcement cases, taken civil judicially or administratively, which may be of national interest.

### C. Civil Penalty Policies

This web link provides the public with access to [EPA's policy documents relating to violations or noncompliance](#) with environmental statutes and regulations, dating back to 1984.

### D. Environmental Laws and Regulations

This [web page](#) provides access to search and read the environmental laws and regulations related to EPA's mission. Regulatory guidance documents and rulemaking activities also are also accessible from this web page.

### E. Selected Regional Judicial Officer (RJO) Cases Since 2005

This [repository](#) contains selected cases involving EPA's Regional Judicial Officers (RJOs) from 2005 to present that are considered significant cases. EPA's RJOs are senior attorneys with backgrounds in EPA enforcement, general law, or both, and they perform adjudicatory functions and act as Agency neutrals in administrative cases.

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### F. Mapping Tool for Enforcement Cases in 2010

This [interactive mapping tool](#) allows the public to get information on EPA enforcement actions and cases from 2010 by zooming on the map or entering a city, state or zip code. The tool includes civil enforcement actions taken by EPA at facilities, criminal cases prosecuted by EPA under federal status and the U.S. Criminal Code, and cases in which EPA provided significant support to cases prosecuted under state criminal laws. The indicators on the map generally mark the location of the site or facility where the violations occurred or were discovered.

### G. EPA Administrative Law Judge Legal Documents

This [repository](#) contains Decisions and Orders from EPA's Administrative Law Judges, who conduct hearings and render decisions in proceedings between the EPA and persons, businesses, government entities, and other organizations which are or are alleged to be regulated under environmental laws. Administrative Law Judges preside in enforcement and permit proceedings in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

## II. Planned Fiscal Year 2011 Actions

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The Agency has plans to continue making more regulatory compliance and enforcement information available to the public and to improve the access to and usability of such information. Our planned actions in this area include:

- Provide the public with easy access to information about violations that affect drinking water, release for the first time information about the severity of drinking water violations, and show the frequency of violations across states. Post a link to ECHO and this new data on Data.gov. (Q3/FY2011)
- Support performance improvements by making information easier to use and comparable across states.
  - Post interactive maps and dashboards that show key indicators of environmental compliance and enforcement activities. (Q4/FY2011)
  - Add state enforcement actions to [EPA's map of federal enforcement actions](#). (Q4/FY2011)
- Publish new data resources.
  - Release (for the first time) national water information about who discharges what and where. (Q4/FY2011)
  - Provide links to more state data and complete pilot to link directly to state permit documents. (Q4/FY2011)



### III. Actions Under Consideration

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The Agency is reviewing several actions and enhancements for the future. Our ability to take these actions is dependent upon other Agency priorities and resource availability. The following actions are being considered:

- Provide more frequent data updates.
- Integrate the national wastewater information with compliance data, allowing the public to understand the magnitude of violations.
- Provide information to indicate if a potentially responsible party at a Superfund site is in substantial noncompliance.
- Solicit public feedback on what additional web services to access compliance information would be most useful and evaluate suggestions to provide the information via Data.gov.
- Request feedback from the public on how to improve access to and use of the ECHO tool.
- Develop a methodology to make it easier to search by parent corporation in EPA's [Facility Registry System](#).
- Integrate additional environmental program data with compliance and enforcement data.
- Create a publically available document repository that includes enforcement and other Agency compliance related documents.