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Use of Public Access Web Servers External to www.epa.gov

Purpose: This policy reiterates the requirement that EPA data and information provided to the public on the World Wide Web be stored, protected, catalogued, and maintained on computer servers that form the EPA Public Access Web site (www.epa.gov). Additionally, it provides the criteria and process for obtaining waivers of this requirement. Procedures for obtaining a waiver are contained in the Attachment.

It also provides policy for these situations:

- partnership Web sites;
- www.epa.gov material that is “mirrored” on a non-EPA Web site;
- use of contractor Web servers to organize EPA-sponsored conferences, meetings and events;
- use of an EPA Web server to provide temporary Web sites in cases of significant, immediate public or environmental need; and
- the Office of Environmental Information lacks the capacity to provide a service, e.g., support an application, required by an EPA office.

Audience: Office Directors and Regional equivalents, Web managers, Web developers and contractor employees who produce EPA Web pages

Background: Agency programs and regions have enthusiastically contributed their information to the EPA Web site, and our combined efforts have made it a popular and frequent source of EPA information for the public, as well as EPA users. Management of EPA pages is decentralized, with Office Directors having the responsibility for content quality.

To provide the public with an Agency-wide content search capability, assure that EPA information is clear, consistent and approved for dissemination at the Office Director level, aid in Agency records management, and protect the integrity and quality of EPA information at known levels, we must use a central cluster of computer servers which

share our well known corporate address, www.epa.gov.

Further, EPA cannot protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of EPA information stored on non-EPA Web sites over which it has no control. This EPA information, however, needs protection comparable to that provided for the information stored on the servers comprising www.epa.gov.

There are several legitimate reasons why all Web sites containing EPA information are not part of www.epa.gov.

Some EPA information is solely on Web sites operated and maintained by a partnership, consortium, or interstate or international commission collaborating with an EPA program office through a formal agreement or mechanism, and the information cannot be easily separated according to its contributors. Some of these sites are located on EPA servers but do not have the www.epa.gov address.

In local situations where there is a significant, immediate public or environmental need, such as chemical spills or newly discovered Superfund sites, EPA program offices have found it necessary to arrange for ongoing, rapid local dissemination and public outreach. In the past, site coordinators contracted with Internet Service Providers to deliver information rapidly to the public, news media and state and local agency officials.

Situations have also arisen where the Office of Environmental Information, through the Working Capital Fund, did not have the technical resources to provide a particular service, e.g. interactive training, required by a program office.

Policy:

The Agency central server cluster at Research Triangle Park, NC, is the official location for both regulatory and programmatic Agency public communications via the Web. All EPA-generated Internet products must be approved by management and published on the "epa.gov" domain for broad public access, following EPA policies and the formats and procedures contained in the EPA Web Guide (www.epa.gov/webguide/topics.html).

Use of contractor Web servers for a limited time period to organize EPA-

sponsored conferences, meetings and events is permitted, and such use does not require a waiver. Longer term post-conference materials belong on www.epa.gov.

A waiver is also not required if EPA information, already on www.epa.gov, is “mirrored,” i.e., exactly duplicated, to a server external to www.epa.gov. The non-EPA site should provide the location of the EPA page from which the duplication was made, to permit users to review the authoritative source of the information. To facilitate OEI oversight, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of each mirrored non-EPA site must be reported to the Director, Information Access Division, OEI (MC 2843).

Waivers

A. Permanent Web Sites

The Chief Information Officer may grant waivers to maintain EPA information on Web sites outside of www.epa.gov, when that information is not an exact duplicate or “mirror” of what is available on www.epa.gov, in certain limited circumstances. The preferred location for these sites is within the EPA server cluster at Research Triangle Park, NC. There may be additional costs for security audits of non-EPA sites, or for providing the service through EPA resources (when it is not part of www.epa.gov). The criteria for a waiver are:

- (1) The server is a public access server connected to the Internet, and
- (2) The server/Web site external to www.epa.gov is jointly operated and maintained by a consortium, interstate or international commission, state, other Federal entity, local government, or similar organization, that is collaborating with an EPA program office, laboratory or region through a formal agreement or mechanism, and
- (3) The EPA contribution to the information is intermingled with other information on the Web site and cannot be easily separated from the non-EPA information, and
- (4) There is a security plan, based on a risk assessment, approved by the Senior Information Resource Management Officer or the Regional IRM Branch Chief, and a management official, and such approval is certified in the waiver request, and

(5) The Assistant Administrator, General Counsel, Inspector General, Chief Financial Officer, Chief of Staff for the Office of the Administrator, Regional Administrator, as appropriate, acknowledges responsibility for the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the EPA information stored on the server external to www.epa.gov through a signature on the request, and

(6) To signify the official standing of the information provided, the EPA logo, i.e., seal and/or identifier, is used, but only if the logos of other participating organizations are used (the agreement with the other participating organizations should require all participants to use appropriate logos), and

(7) In so far as possible, the originating office publishes the EPA information on EPA's Public Access Web site, even if it requires a different context or format.

Information needed in requests for waivers of permanent Web sites is in Attachment A, Obtaining A Waiver to Use Public Access Web Servers External to www.epa.gov.

B. Temporary Emergency Web Sites

A blanket waiver up to eight months is granted to program offices which use the Emergency Response Center server of the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) at Edison, NJ, to create Web sites to deliver local EPA information where there is a significant, immediate public or environmental need for rapid deployment. This server meets the security requirements established by the Office of Environmental Information and is subject to periodic audits. OSWER will be responsible for reporting the establishment of each Web site to OEI (Information Access Division, MC 2843) within 30 days of its establishment. The following information must be provided: program office requesting the site, purpose of the site, Uniform Resource Locator, date site was established, and the name of a contact. At the end of eight months the Web site must be inactivated. However, OEI will consider a request for one additional 30-day period per Web site.

If the site includes nationally relevant information (e.g., a study about chemicals found at a Superfund site, published by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention), this information should be duplicated to www.epa.gov.

Attachment B is a sample notification memorandum containing the conditions for this waiver.

C. Non-Standard Applications

Program offices should confer with the staff of OEI's National Technical Service Division (NTSD) prior to developing non-standard applications for delivering EPA information to the public through the Internet. If NTSD can meet the need through a supported information technology architecture, program offices must use that supported option. If NTSD is unable to provide the required service or environment, and the Office Director wants to use another provider, then a waiver request must be submitted.

Roles and Responsibilities:

A. The Chief Information Officer/Assistant Administrator, Office of Environmental Information (OEI), is responsible for:

- (1) oversight the protection of the confidentiality, integrity and availability of EPA information
- (2) monitoring compliance with this policy;
- (3) evaluating and approving waiver requests under this policy.

B. Offices of the Administrator, Assistant Administrators, General Counsel, Inspector General, Chief of Staff for the Office of the Administrator, and Regional Administrators, are responsible for

- (1) protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of EPA data and information under their control, and
- (2) ensuring compliance with this policy, and
- (3) evaluating and rejecting/recommending any waivers requested under this policy.

C. In addition to the responsibilities stated above, the Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response is responsible for maintaining an EPA Web server at the Environmental Response Center, Edison, NJ, to provide the capacity to create Web sites to deliver local EPA information where there is a significant, immediate public or environmental need for rapid

deployment. This server must meet the security requirements contained in the EPA Information Security Manual (2195) and Chapter 8 of the IRM Manual (2100).

Authorities:

a. Deputy Administrator Memorandum, "EPA's Policy Regarding the Agency's Central Public Access Server," June 30, 2000.

(www.epa.gov/webguide/docs/roguefinal.htm)

b. Deputy Administrator Memorandum, "Importance of Public Availability of EPA Information Via Internet," September 23, 1996.

(www.epa.gov/webguide/started/hansmemo.html)

c. Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1980, as amended in 1995, requires agencies to provide for the dissemination of public information on a timely basis, on equitable terms, and in a manner that promotes the utility of the information to the public and makes effective use of information technology.

d. OMB Bulletin 95-01, Establishment of Government Information Locator Service (GILS), December 7, 1994, is designed to help the public and agencies locate and access information electronically throughout the U.S. government.

Related Documents: Web guide (<http://www.epa.gov/webguide/>)

Definitions:

"Data" are numbers, figures or observations provided without interpretation.

"Information" is a communication or representation of knowledge such as facts or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative or audiovisual forms. "EPA information," for the purpose of this policy, is defined as that information which is gathered or maintained by EPA, or information obtained from other sources for which EPA accepts a stewardship role.

"Public Access Web server" is a server or server cluster that provides unrestricted access to EPA's information. Such a server does not contain any confidential information.

“Risk assessment” is a qualitative determination of risk to a collection of sensitive data and the people, systems, and installations involved in storing and processing that data. Its purpose is to determine how protective techniques can be effectively applied to minimize potential loss.

“www.epa.gov” is the Uniform Resource Locator for the EPA Public Access Web site, also known as the EPA Home Page. It includes all servers which provide data and information presented at this Web location.

Recertification

Date: _____
Three years from date issued

Additional Information:

For further information about this Policy, please contact Odelia Funke, Chief, Policy and Program Management Branch, Office of Information Analysis and Access, 202-260-0244, email: funke.odelia@epa.gov.

Attachment A: Obtaining A Waiver to Use Public Access Web Servers External to www.epa.gov
Attachment B: Blanket Waiver Memorandum for Temporary Web Sites

Attachment A

Obtaining A Waiver to Use Public Access Web Servers External to www.epa.gov

- Procedures:** The EPA office seeking to place EPA information on a server external to www.epa.gov provides a document which:
- (1) explains the reason for requesting the waiver.
 - (2) identifies the Office Director responsible for the EPA information.
 - (3) includes assurances that a security plan, based on a risk assessment, has been approved by the Senior Information Resource Management Officer or the Regional IRM Branch Chief, and a management official, for the Web site (the EPA Information Security Manual (2195) and Chapter 8 of the IRM Manual (2100) provide background information).
 - (4) states the requesting office's understanding that the waived site is subject to periodic security audits, possibly at the expense of the requesting office.
 - (5) includes a privacy protection policy for the Web site.
 - (6) states that the site complies with EPA accessibility (Section 508) requirements (intranet.epa.gov/accessibility/).
 - (7) states that the proposed site complies with the Product Review guidelines established by the Office of Communications, Education and Media Relations (www.epa.gov/webguide/started/ocrules.html).
 - (8) states that the originating office will follow EPA records management and archiving requirements and procedures for EPA data and information (intranet.epa.gov/records/drafts/2160/index.htm).
 - (9) states that the requesting office understands that technical support and statistics for external sites are the responsibility of the external hosting organization. Support for other than routine problem isolation and resolution may require a service agreement with NTSD.

In partnerships, it is strongly recommended that the joint Web site include a disclaimer stating that the information is drawn from multiple sources, i.e., EPA, et.al., and suggest that the viewer examine the information in its original context, if that is possible. Directions to that information should be provided.

The document should originate at the Office Director level and be approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator, or equivalent level.

Send requests for waivers to the Agency's Chief Information Officer (Mailcode 2810). The CIO will make a decision on the waiver request within 60 days.

Attachment B

Blanket Waiver Memorandum for Temporary Web Sites

MEMORANDUM

FROM: SIRMO, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response

TO: Director, Information Access Division (MC 2843)
Office of Information Analysis and Access
Office of Environmental Information

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify you that, in accordance with EPA Order XXXX, OSWER has established a temporary Web site on its Environmental Response Center server at Edison, NJ, to provide EPA information to the public. This Web site was requested by _____ .

This temporary Web site is necessary because _____

The details of this Web site are as follows:

- (1) Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for this Web site is _____ .
- (2) This Web site was established on (date _____) .
- (3) The point of contact for this Web site is (name, phone number _____)

We understand that this waiver is for a maximum of eight months but we may request a **one** 30 day continuance by memorandum to the above addressee.

The requesting office has committed to duplicating the EPA data and information contained on this site on the EPA Public Access Web site (www.epa.gov), through standard established procedures, within 60 days.