

CHAPTER 3 - STATE/EPA DATA MANAGEMENT

1. PURPOSE. This policy establishes the principles that govern the management and sharing of data between EPA and State environmental agencies and the information systems that handle these data. This policy also defines roles and responsibilities for implementing and ensuring adherence to these principles.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY. This policy is applicable to all EPA programs and Regional offices that develop and operate information systems that are used by the States or that contain data reported to EPA by States.

3. BACKGROUND.

a. The underlying rationale for EPA's policy on State delegation includes a recognition that more effective environmental protection results when Federal goals and regulations are implemented in a fashion that is responsive to the diversity of local conditions. EPA's policies on information management must reflect this same balance of compliance with Federal statutes and priorities and responsiveness to local diversity.

b. Federal policy, as most recently set forth in OMB Circular A-130, specifies that Federal agencies may "not require Federal information systems that unduly restrict the prerogatives of heads of State and local government units..."

c. EPA remains responsible and accountable to the President, the Congress and the public for progress toward meeting national goals and for ensuring that Federal statutes are adequately enforced. In accordance with "EPA Policy on Oversight of Delegated Environmental Programs," April 4, 1984, the Agency has the responsibility to oversee the conduct of delegated inter-governmental programs, to enhance State capabilities to administer environmental protection programs and to analyze the status of State, regional and national environmental quality through ongoing monitoring and data collection efforts.

d. EPA's policy of delegating program implementation responsibility to States means that the ultimate effectiveness of the Agency depends, to a very large

extent, on the effectiveness of State program managers. Among the several factors that determine the success of State program managers is their capacity to obtain and use management and environmental information.

e. EPA's ability to oversee and support State performance of delegated programs, and to report on these programs to the resident, the Congress and the public, is also heavily dependent upon accurate and timely State information resources and systems.

f. EPA seeks to improve environmental decisions by more consistent and reliable estimation of health risk based on sound data and analysis methods and by integrating permitting, regulatory and compliance efforts across program lines. Improvement in the information management systems will result in more timely, quality assured data, a more integrated risk assessment and overall better State/EPA program management.

g. Although each has requirements that differ in detail and emphasis, there are substantial benefits to EPA and to State agencies if both have timely reliable access to the same basic management and environmental information.

h. Most EPA programs have developed data systems to receive State reports and to provide the reports and analysis required by national program managers. There are substantial benefits to EPA when States agree to meet Agency reporting requirements by entering data directly into these systems. In at least some cases, States also benefit by gaining access to data and information systems capabilities that they cannot develop on their own. However, the benefits to States from using EPA information systems to report or to process data depend on several factors:

- (1) The existing State investment in its own information systems
- (2) The accessibility and reliability of the EPA systems for both entering and retrieving data
- (3) The reliability and quality of EPA user support

(4) The extent to which EPA systems contribute to State management objectives as the integration of environmental and management data, both across programs delegated from EPA and other State programs

(5) The costs in using such systems both in actual dollars and resources necessary for use.

4. AUTHORITIES.

a. OMB Circular A-130, Management of Federal Information Resources.

5. POLICY. It is EPA policy that Agency reporting requirements and information systems will be responsive to the information needs of State environmental agencies and will take into account the diversity among States in terms of organization, resources and program responsibilities. EPA systems that process and store data obtained from States will adhere to data management policies that avoid duplication of data and effort and promote integrated environmental program planning EPA. EPA will assure timely and reliable State access to any Agency information system that contains data obtained from States in response to EPA reporting requirements.

a. As required by OMB Circular A-130, EPA will adhere to reporting and information systems policies that do not unduly restrict State prerogatives to plan and manage information resources in response to State policy and management priorities.

b. EPA information systems that process and store data provided by States in response to EPA reporting requirements will, insofar as practical, be developed and operate to accommodate State management needs. More specifically:

(1) EPA will ensure that States are afforded an active role in developing, improving and modifying information systems through the establishment of user groups, policy groups and other mechanisms which promote continuing State/Federal

interaction.

(2) EPA will, insofar as practical, design such systems with the flexibility to accommodate State needs for related data standards that facilitate State information systems planning and the integration of data across EPA and State program lines.

3-3

IRM POLICY MANUAL

2100

7/21/87

(3) EPA will develop such systems in adherence to technology and data standards that facilitate State information systems planning and the integration of data across EPA and State program lines.

(4) EPA will design such systems to accept direct, electronic transmission of data from States that operate their own information systems.

(5) EPA will design such systems to support direct, electronic transmission of data to States from EPA systems to support local data analysis.

(6) EPA will strive to achieve consistency in design and access methods consistent with current industry technology.

c. New EPA systems and data bases developed to process and store data obtained from State environmental agencies shall be designed to support timely and reliable State access to these data. Existing EPA systems that contain State data should allow for timely and reliable State access. Timely and reliable State access will vary according to the nature of the data and the system; however, for EPA's major national systems and data bases, it means:

(1) Direct, on-line State access to current data files

(2) The use of software and data communications technologies that adhere to Agency standards and that support efficient State access for reporting and retrieval of data

(3) The provision of documentation and user assistance to State users on a consistent and current basis.

d. For those States which agree to meet EPA reporting requirements by directly entering data into EPA systems, the

Agency will regard such data as the official State record of the delegated program. EPA will not unilaterally change these data, since doing so would force the State to maintain a separate system of records.

e. EPA will allow the States at their option to enter data regarding non-delegated programs into the EPA systems.

3-4

IRM POLICY MANUAL

2100

7/21/87

However, States are not mandated to meet the same requirements in the non-delegated programs that they are obliged to meet for the delegated ones.

EPA will support the use of State grant funds to develop State information resources and technology to the extent that doing so is consistent with the purposes for which these funds were appropriated. EPA will seek State proposals which assign funds from one or more EPA grants for information resources and technology that:

- (1) Promote the integration of environmental planning and management across State and EPA program lines
- (2) Foster improved data sharing between EPA and the State.

g. EPA will design and manage its computing and data communications network to support timely and reliable State access to EPA systems and data bases. EPA's pursuit of this goal will be based on the following assumptions:

- (1) The achievement of this goal is dependent on the constraints of available resources.
- (2) EPA does not seek to be the primary or the "first choice" computing resource for any State environmental agency.
- (3) EPA does not seek to provide computing and or in competition with either State or commercial sources.

h. EPA recognizes one of the advantages of sharing data is reduced reporting by the States. Therefore, if a State is

entering data directly into the EPA system, EPA will, insofar as practicable, adhere to data management policies that avoid duplication of data and effort and not require that the State report this information in additional formats.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. The Office of Information Resources Management shall:

(1) Develop guidelines and programs to ensure that

3-5

IRM POLICY MANUAL

2100

7/21/87

Agency reporting requirements and information systems are defined and implemented in accord with this policy.

(2) Provide guidance and assistance to Assistant Administrators, Associate Administrators and Regional Administrators in implementing the requirements of this policy.

(3) Plan and oversee the acquisition, deployment and use of information technology within EPA to ensure support for effective management and sharing of data by EPA and State environmental agencies.

(4) Ensure EPA compliance with Federal statutes and regulations governing the acquisition, operation and use of information technology employed to share data between EPA and State agencies.

(5) Evaluate and report on the effectiveness of Agency activities in achieving the goals of this policy.

b. National Data Processing Division shall:

(1) Design and manage the acquisition and operation of data processing and telecommunications resources to support effective management and exchange of data between EPA and State environmental agencies.

(2) Develop standards for EPA data processing and telecommunications technology services that support the goals of this policy.

(3) Provide technical advice and assistance to EPA and, upon request, to State environmental agencies concerning the acquisition and implementation of information technology to achieve the goals of this policy.

c. Assistant Administrators and Associate Administrators shall assure:

(1) That State agency requirements for information and information technology are addressed in the design and implementation of EPA programs.

3-6

IRM POLICY MANUAL

2100
7/21/87

(2) That the information systems and data management practices of programs and activities under their direction are in accord with this policy.

(3) Effective State participation in the design and operation of national information systems and data bases that contain data reported by States and provide timely and reliable access by States to such data bases.

d. Regional Administrators shall assure that:

(1) State requirements for information and information technology are effectively addressed in State delegation agreements, State grants and other agreements between EPA and States.

(2) Regional procedures for handling and validating State-reported data guarantee the integrity and accessibility of such data as required by this policy.

(3) The Regional Office has an effective program to foster and support State/EPA data management and sharing that meets at a minimum EPA Federal reporting requirements.

e. The Office of Administration shall:

(1) Develop and implement policies and procedures to assure that information collection and processing activities performed by EPA contractors and grantees comply with this policy.

7. DEFINITIONS.

a. "Data refers to a collection of unorganized facts that have not yet been processed into information.

b. "Data Base" is a collection of integrated data that can be used for a variety of applications.

c. "Data Communications" refers to computer-to-computer, computer-to-device, device-to-computer communications and other communications such as a record, tele-processing and telemetry.

3-7

IRM POLICY MANUAL

2100

7/21/87

d. "Information Technology" refers to the hardware and software used in connection with government information, regardless of the technology involved, whether computers, telecommunications, micrographics or others.

e. "Software" refers to computer programs, procedures, rules and associated documentation pertaining to the operation of a computer system.

f. "Telecommunications" is the transmission and/or reception of information by telephone, telephone lines, telegraph, radio or other methods of communication over a distance. The information may be in the form of voice, pictures, text and/or encoded data.

8. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES. Procedures and guidelines will be issued under separate cover.

