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Urban Communities: Introduction

An important goal of TRI is to empower citizens through information that will allow them to better understand industrial activity, environmental releases, and potential risks in their communities. Using information from TRI can help community members make informed decisions about how toxic chemicals are managed in their neighborhoods, and hold companies and governments accountable. TRI data also serve as a rough indicator of facilities' environmental performance and progress over time. Knowing that the data are available to the public often spurs companies to focus on and improve their chemical management practices.

In this section we profile thirteen urban communities in the United States from the standpoint of toxic chemical disposal or other releases. Urban areas are home to more than 80% of the U.S. population. They are also home to many of the industrial facilities that report to TRI. The thirteen urban communities profiled here are the most populous in the United States and the most populous in each EPA Region as defined by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population. An MSA is an area of one or more socially and economically integrated adjacent counties, cities, or towns. These thirteen urban communities together contain about 29% of the U.S. population and about 19% of the facilities that report to TRI. Listed below, in decreasing order of their population, are the top U.S. MSAs, which are also shown in the following map:

- [New York–Northern New Jersey–Long Island, NY–NJ–PA](#) [Español]
- [Los Angeles–Long Beach–Santa Ana, CA](#) [Español]
- [Chicago–Naperville–Joliet, IL–IN–WI](#) [Español]
- [Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX](#) [Español]
- [Philadelphia–Camden–Wilmington, PA–NJ–DE–MD](#) [Español]
- [Houston–Sugar Land–Baytown, TX](#) [Español]
- [Miami–Fort Lauderdale–Pompano Beach, FL](#) [Español]
- [Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC–VA–MD–WV](#) [Español]
- [Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Marietta, GA](#) [Español]
- [Boston–Cambridge–Quincy, MA–NH](#) [Español]
- [Seattle–Tacoma–Bellevue, WA](#) [Español]
- [St. Louis, MO–IL](#) [Español]
- [Denver–Aurora–Broomfield, CO](#) [Español]



Top Major Metropolitan Statistical Areas Map

For each urban community profiled, we graphically show the top TRI reporting industry sectors by quantity of toxic chemicals disposed of or otherwise released; the top chemicals disposed or otherwise released to the air, water, land and underground injection; and trends in the disposal or other releases from 2001 to the most recent year of data, 2009. While facilities have been reporting to TRI for more than two decades, for consistency in presenting the trends from year to year we show only the years after 2000 when the set of chemicals and industry sectors required to report did not change. In several years prior to 2001, industry sectors and chemicals were added to the TRI reporting requirements.

In each urban community profile we list the major industry sectors operating in the community. Much of this information was obtained from local business organizations or chambers of commerce, which advocate on behalf of the business community. It is important to note that not all of the industries mentioned in the urban community profiles are industry sectors required to report to TRI.

You can access much more information on TRI covered facilities and chemicals near your home by using the tools and resources available on the EPA website. For example, using [myRTK](#) and [TRI Explorer](#), you can enter your ZIP code to get a list of facilities in your area and detailed information on the toxic chemicals they manage as waste. Additionally, myRTK provides chemical hazard and facility compliance information.

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Urban Communities: Greater Houston Area



TRI facilities in Greater Houston Area

Quick Facts for 2009:

Number of TRI Facilities: 468

Total On-site and
Off-site Disposal or
Other Releases: 72.5 million lbs

Total On-site: 54.8 million lbs
 • Air: 20.8 million lbs
 • Water: 6.0 million lbs
 • Land: 5.5 million lbs
 • Underground Injection: 22.6 million lbs

Total Off-site: 17.7 million lbs

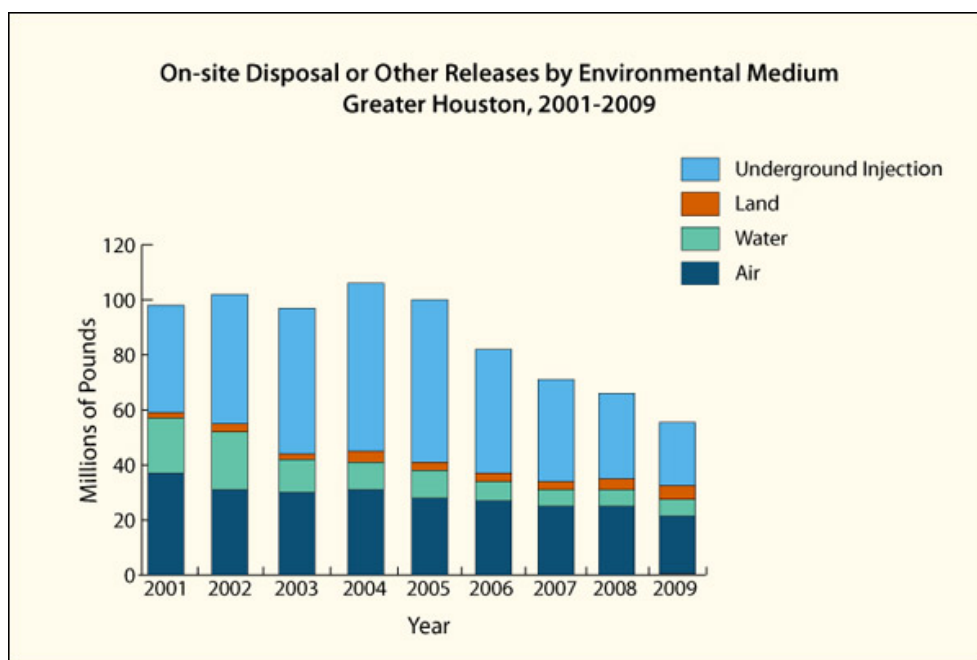
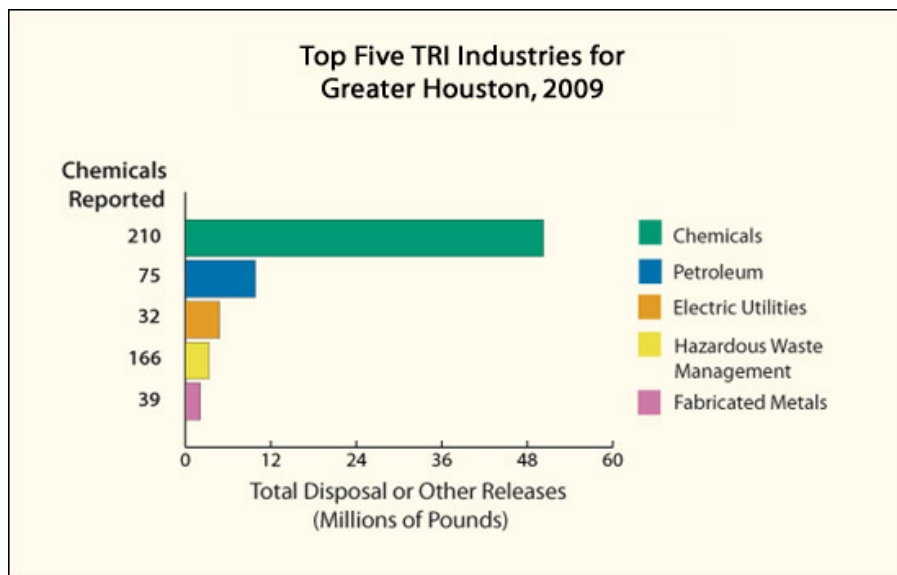
The Houston–Sugar Land–Baytown metropolitan statistical area is a 10–county urban community located along the Gulf Coast region in southeast Texas. The metropolitan area is often referred to as "Greater Houston." It is the sixth–largest metropolitan area in the United States with a population of 5.7 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.

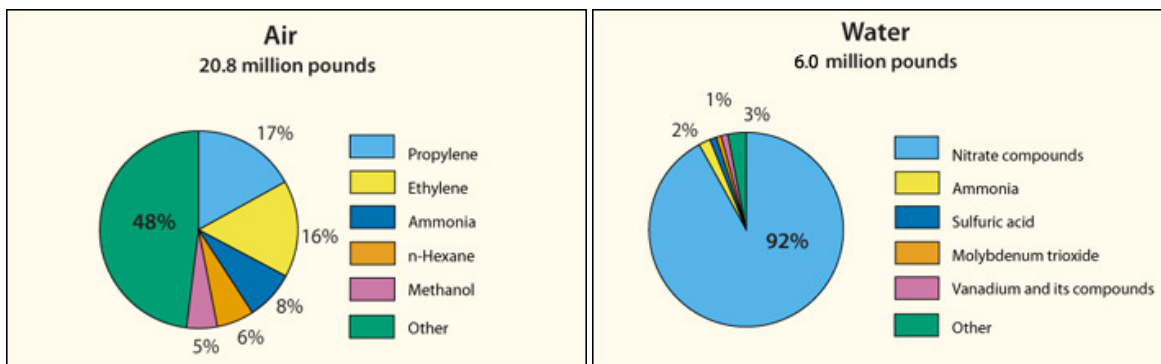
Much of the economic activity within the metropolitan area is based on shipping and manufacturing. According to the Greater Houston Partnership, an organization advocating for regional businesses, Galveston Bay and the Buffalo Bayou together form one of the most important shipping hubs in the world. 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.

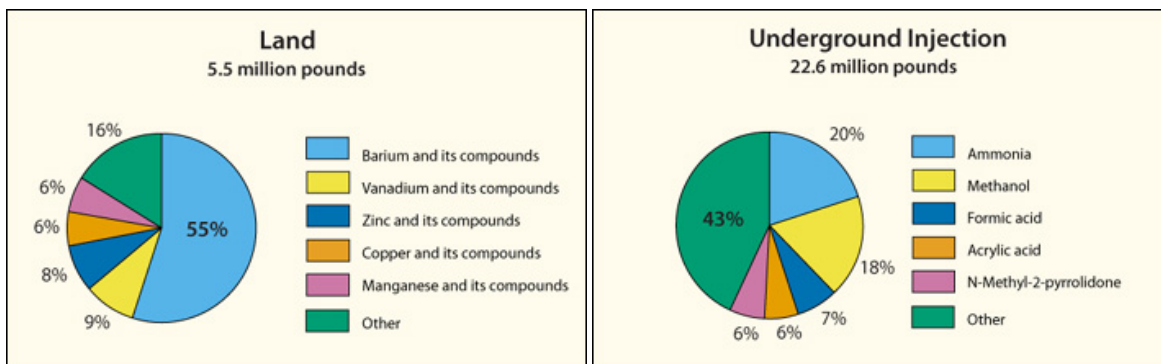
Chemical manufacturers had the largest on–site total disposal or other releases in the Greater Houston metropolitan area, accounting for two–thirds of the total; they also had the largest underground injection (with 82% of the total), air releases (with 66% of the total) and surface water discharges (with 55% of the total). One inorganic chemical manufacturer reported 59% of the total underground injection in this area.

Total on–site disposal or other releases decreased by 44% from 2001 to 2009, with a decrease of 17% from 2008 to 2009. The chemical manufacturing sector had a decrease of 51% from 2001 to 2009, including a decrease of 54% in underground injection and 81% in surface water discharges. The petroleum refining sector had a decrease of 36%, including a decrease of 53% in air releases.



Top Five Chemicals by Environmental Medium, 2009





These charts represent the top five TRI chemicals in pounds released for this urban community, and do not include all chemicals of concern nor the priority or importance of those chemicals within the urban community.

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 Last updated on Monday, November 14, 2011
 Last updated on Tuesday, August 21, 2012

