



EXPLAINING THE RELEASE GUIDELINES PROCESS



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Environment and Climate Change Canada
Public Inquiries Centre
12th Floor, Fontaine Building
200 Sacré-Coeur Boulevard
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
Telephone: 819-938-3860
Toll Free: 1-800-668-6767 (in Canada only)
Email: ec.enviroinfo.ec@canada.ca

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We develop release guidelines in collaboration with industry to achieve specific environmental or human health objectives.

As release guidelines are voluntary instruments, they are more likely to achieve their objectives when the participants are committed to adopt the release limits and have a good compliance history with other risk management instruments.

The development phase

During the development of release guidelines, we focus our activities on three main areas.

Knowing the target audience

Knowing the target audience helps ensure the release guidelines are relevant and applicable for all potential participants. We collect information on:

- the size and geographical distribution of the facilities within the industry sector
- whether they are represented by industry associations
- whether they are subject to similar initiatives from other departments or levels of government
- their history of compliance with other risk management instruments, and their history of environmental performance
- whether there are potential barriers preventing them from adopting the release limits within the release guidelines

Setting the recommended release limits

Release limits are specific to a chemical substance or group of chemical substances. The limits can be set based on the amount or concentration of the substance(s) that should not pose a risk to the environment or human health, as determined during the [risk assessment process](#). They can also align with requirements of different governments inside or outside Canada (such as the [base-level industrial emissions requirements](#), or BLIERs).

We review and consider information from industries, non-governmental organizations or other government bodies in Canada and abroad. The limits should be stringent enough to allow us to meet the objectives for environment or human health protection. They should also be attainable by the participants using available techniques and technology. Finally, they should be standardized and measurable. Therefore, we also provide recommended measurement methods for participants to monitor their releases. We include these measurement methods within the release guidelines themselves or we provide hyperlinks or contact information so they are easy to access by participants.

Consulting stakeholders

We conduct consultations throughout the development of the release guidelines. Since release guidelines provide limits on releases and do not always specify the actions to take, early consultations can help ensure that the limits can be met. They also provide opportunities for feedback on the content of the instrument, including data collection, verification and performance reporting.

Consultation methods commonly used during the development of release guidelines include:

- webinars and teleconferences
- invitations to stakeholders to provide written comments on draft versions
- publication in the *Canada Gazette* (as required in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* [CEPA])

We consider the characteristics of the potential participants as well as interested stakeholders when determining consultation methods. A combination of methods is often necessary for meaningful consultations.

The implementation phase

Once we finalize the release guidelines, we publish them in the *Canada Gazette*, Part I, and [online](#), and the implementation phase begins. All risk management instruments benefit from implementation activities, especially voluntary instruments like release guidelines.

Promoting compliance

Compliance promotion begins at publication and continues throughout the life cycle of the release guidelines. That way, new industry facilities are made aware of them, and existing participants continue to follow them. Compliance promotion activities include:

- sending copies of the release guidelines directly to the target audience
- making the guidelines available online and permitting their use on websites of relevant associations and other stakeholders
- working with associations, suppliers, and others within the target audience to communicate information on the guidelines
- communicating the existence of the guidelines at conferences and workshops
- providing an e-mail address and phone number where participants can send their questions
- sending reminders to participants in advance of reporting deadlines and other key milestones

Data collection

To measure the effectiveness of participants at meeting the objectives of the release guidelines, we collect performance data, such as quantitative release, use or concentration data. We may collect data directly from participants from annual reports, from internal and external databases (such as the [National Pollutant Release Inventory](#)), from other governments or from the public domain.

When collecting data from the participants, we use different approaches to facilitate and encourage reporting, such as:

- providing sample forms within the instrument itself
- providing detailed methods for measuring or calculating emissions or releases
- allowing submission of reports by e-mail to ec.rg-dr.ec@canada.ca.

Anyone submitting information with respect to the release guidelines may request, in writing, that we consider all or parts of the information as confidential. We may grant confidentiality if the information meets the criteria specified in section 317 of CEPA, and with reference to section 20 of the *Access to Information Act*. We will evaluate each request and inform the submitter of our decision in writing.

Verification

Verification is the process by which we verify the accuracy of the data reported, including the methodology used to gather and analyze the data.

We use a number of different methods to verify the results, including:

- desktop review
- site visits
- audit or sampling by a third party
- comparison to other data sources (such as the National Pollutant Release Inventory or data from other jurisdictions)

Performance measurement

Performance measurement consists of analyzing the performance data (see Data collection section above) against specific targets to determine if participants implementing actions in response to the release guidelines are on track to achieve their objectives. Performance measurement takes place on a regular basis throughout the implementation phase. This allows us to adjust implementation activities if the targets are not met.

Ultimately, performance measurement will help us determine whether there is a need to maintain the original release guidelines, amend them or replace them with an enforceable risk management instrument such as regulations.

Performance reporting

We summarize performance results and share them [online](#) as a means to increase transparency and encourage continuous improvement.