

About this report

Thousands of companies regularly flush more toxic chemicals into the Great Lakes and the nation's other waterways than the law allows. The Detroit News reviewed federal enforcement records and found that of the 6,500 largest industrial and sewer plants, three-quarters have violations, over the past two years, tied to pollution in excess of limits meant to keep the public safe. Fewer than a quarter of the facilities were punished.

The rampant violations are among the causes of a six-year increase in toxic water pollution in Great Lakes waterways. The 25 percent increase threatens to erode a generation of progress in staunching the flow of harmful chemicals into the world's largest source of fresh water.

Related Links

- ▶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Has detailed information on toxic releases, as well as pollution rules and water quality. The EPA maintains the U.S. Toxics Release Inventory. www.epa.gov
- ▶ Canadian Ministry of the Environment: Canada's lead environmental agency has information on pollution. The ministry maintains Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory. www.ec.gc.ca
- ▶ Commission for Environmental Cooperation: An international group set up by the North American Free Trade Agreement, it tracks pollution trends in the United States and Canada. www.cec.org
- ▶ International Joint Commission: A partnership between the United States and Canada, it tracks Great Lakes issues, including water quality. www.ijc.org
- ▶ Michigan Department of Environmental Quality: Michigan's lead environmental agency has information on water pollution permits. www.michigan.gov/deq
- ▶ Great Lakes United: An environmental group that tracks Great Lakes pollution issues. www.glu.org
- ▶ Clean Water Action: An environmental group that advocates the eventual elimination of toxic water pollution. www.cleanwateraction.org
- ▶ Michigan Environmental Council: An umbrella group for Michigan's environmental organizations, it deals with statewide water quality issues. www.mecprotects.org
- ▶ Public Interest Research Group: PIRG tracks pollution and enforcement trends. www.pirg.org

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Great Lakes: Toxic fears



Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News

Isaiah Rumbley, left, and Walt Melnyk often fish the Rouge River intake near Zug Island's plant complex. Experts say the toxin levels should be lower for safe fishing.

Great Lakes polluters dump without fear, Part 1

Thousands of companies regularly flush more toxic chemicals into the Great Lakes and the nation's other waterways than the law allows, with little fear of punishment. 10/05/03

Great Lakes polluters dump without fear, Part 2

Attempts to reduce water pollution accelerated 30 years ago, when the U.S. Clean Water Act capped emissions and set an ambitious goal to cut off all toxic chemicals flowing into major waterways by 1985. The rules have contributed to vast improvements in water quality over a generation. 10/05/03

Great Lakes polluters dump without fear, Part 3

Almost no one expects to eradicate all toxic pollution. But experts say more can be eliminated. Toxic pollution increased even as the Bush administration approved spending \$270 million over five years to clean toxin-laced sediments from the lakes. 10/05/03

Long-term impact of toxins is unclear

Toxic pollution in the Great Lakes usually poses few immediate health risks. 10/05/03

Preventing pollution: What can be done at home?

Pollution prevention tips from the National Wildlife Federation's publication "A Green Home is a Healthy Home" can help you identify ways that pollution from your household affects your local environment. 10/04/03

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