



Oregon
Environmental
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**Testimony to the
Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
on Senate Bill 995
Relating to Hazardous Materials
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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council urges support for SB 995 to require employers to submit an annual materials balance report on the facility's input and output of hazardous materials to Department of Environmental Quality.

As an organization that works at the nexus of human health and the environment, OEC advocates for adoption of safer alternatives to hazardous materials as well as responsible stewardship programs to reduce both waste and exposure.

We support SB 995 and a materials balancing approach to reporting for three reasons. First, it encourages strong protocols for stewardship of hazardous materials; second, it encourages the adoption of less hazardous alternatives; third, it has the potential to provide data that can help researchers evaluate cumulative and synergistic effects of releases to the environment.

Strong protocols for stewardship of hazards: No matter the care we take, accidents happen. Valves and gaskets leak, materials are spilled or dropped, chemicals are mixed in dirty containers. It's only human that occasional errors will lead to releases to the environment. Furthermore, unless one is intentionally tracking air and water, released of hazardous materials may go unnoticed or unreported. When more than ten thousand facilities in Oregon are using any of a hundred different hazardous materialsⁱ, it is only likely that errors, accidents or simply overlooking an incident will occur.

By adopting a materials balancing approach, facilities must ensure that inputs balance outputs. This accounting for hazards will help ensure that facilities are equipped to better

recognize the risk and liability posed by hazardous materials.

Encouraging adoption of less hazardous materials: Better accounting for materials flow will encourage facilities to make informed decisions about the return on investment for adopting safer alternatives. Too often, environmental costs and liabilities from the use of toxic materials are left out of conventional management accounting. When a business becomes aware of the liabilities and costs associated with managing waste, the value of preventing waste becomes evident. Oregon Environmental Council's "Advancing Green Chemistry" report describes how careful accounting by Blount, Inc. led the chain saw manufacturer to switch the way it prepares parts for chrome platingⁱⁱ. It became clear that moving from a toxic process to a non-toxic one would ensure worker safety, reduce waste management costs, and cut toxics out of 800,000 gallons a year—quickly paying for the cost of new equipment.

More data for better environmental health research: When releases to the environment are evaluated in the context of past, present and future releases in a community, the overall environmental and human health effects may differ. Pollutants may not only add up, but also become greater than their sum when they react synergistically or when they travel a complex pathway in the environment to create a secondary hazard. Accounting for what may seem like an insignificant release of a hazardous material can provide critical data necessary for public health researchers to better understand human health implications.

The Oregon Environmental Council, on behalf of our members throughout Oregon, urges support for SB 995.

ⁱ Oregon office of the fire marshal, 2014 CR2K annual summary; accessed online 3/17/17; <http://www.oregon.gov/osp/SFM/docs/CR2K/CR2KAnnualSummary.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Advancing Green Chemistry, 2010, Oregon Environmental Council: http://oeonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Advancing_Green_Chemistry_Report_Sept2010_web.pdf