



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL  
GOVERNOR

PEGGY M. HATCH  
SECRETARY

**For Immediate Release**  
March 1, 2011

**Contact:** Rodney Mallett  
**Phone:** 225-219-3964

### **Forbes report does not paint accurate picture**

**BATON ROUGE** – Today, a Forbes magazine report listed Baton Rouge as one of the “top five toxic cities in America.” The report doesn’t actually say how Baton Rouge made the list. However, it does say it looked at the number of superfund sites, the quality of the drinking water, the Toxic Release Inventory, air quality and water quality when determining the list.

Louisiana’s air quality is the best it’s been in 30 years. The entire state, including the Baton Rouge five-parish area, currently has data that shows it meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for all criteria pollutants. Baton Rouge has been labeled as nonattainment by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the 1-hour ozone standard and previous 8-hour ozone standards. In 2010, data showed the state met those standards. In fact, the Forbes report stated that Baton Rouge had no air quality exceedances over the Air Quality Index threshold of 100.

DEQ also has data that shows the state’s surface water quality is the best it’s been in 30 years. The Baton Rouge area only has one Superfund site. The report stated that “top water concerns” was not applicable.

This leaves the Toxic Release Inventory data. Forbes lists the TRI release data at 33.6 million pounds on “on-site releases.” The reports states: “But keep in mind that toxic substances are harmful only if you’re actually exposed to them. ‘Simply being near a site doesn’t mean you’re actually being exposed to that site,’ emphasizes Robert Chapin, a senior research advisor at [Pfizer](#) in Groton, Conn., and affiliate of the Society of Toxicology. A report to the TRI doesn’t indicate the chemicals are being improperly handled or are being released in any hazardous way; indeed it’s an indication that a company is complying with its reporting requirement.”

Also, the 33.6 million pounds come from a nine-parish area in 2009. East Baton Rouge Parish TRI releases were 11.9 million pounds in 2009. The TRI data is not equal to health risk. Low-level releases and low-level exposure likely pose little to no risk. TRI data is not limited to just air releases. Many times, these releases, which are self-reported by industries, are disposed of properly in safe landfills or injected underground in a manner which is protective of human health and the environment. However, they are reported as releases to the Toxic Release Inventory.

“We have scientific data that shows the environment in Louisiana is the best it’s been in many years and continues to improve,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “The most impressive number in the Forbes report is that Baton Rouge had ‘none’ listed for the number of unhealthy air quality days. I’m confident that with the number of air monitors in Baton Rouge, and throughout the state, we would know if there were any health risks related to air quality. DEQ has a comprehensive water monitoring program, we issue permits that are protective of human health and the environment and conduct regular inspections with industry across the state. While there is always room for improvement, and we have environmental issues to address, the quality of Louisiana’s environment continues to improve through real science.”