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Well, hello. Good morning everyone. I am very excited to be here participating in this symposium and discussing this important topic. I think this is something that is very relevant, for me, from the perspective of I actually grew up in some of these EJ communities. And the other piece of it, just being here at Ole Miss, as you've heard I graduated from Jackson State University. That's where I got my undergraduate degree. But I used to come up here from time to time and I haven't been on this campus in over thirty years. It's improved quite a bit. This building wasn't here, of course, and I see so many improvements here and I'm just happy to see all the improvements here and be back in Mississippi. I don't get to come back very often, now, being in Washington, but it's just good to be back here.

What I thought I'd do is, I want to quickly talk about the Environmental Protection Agency at a high level. And then I want to talk about what my role is and you've heard some my panel members talk about information and you'll see in a few moments how that ties into what I do. And then I'll talk about my organization and what we do. And this organization, I have to tell you, I just feel very privileged to be able to lead it here at EPA.

To begin with, EPA is led by administrator Lisa Jackson, who is an amazing person. She brings a tremendous amount of experience and passion to her role. It's the mission of EPA to protect human health and the environment in which we live. Now you might ask, what does that mean? Well, we ensure that the air that you breathe is clean, that the water that you drink meets certain quality standards, and the land you live on is free of pollutants. The agency accomplishes this by setting environmental rules and regulations which corporations and organizations and individuals must comply with. A company complies by providing environmental data to a state environmental agency, which reports its information to EPA. Here in Mississippi, your state

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environmental agency is the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, which is led by Ms. Trudy Fisher and we're fortunate to have her here today participating in this event.

I am the assistant administrator for the Office of Environmental Information and the agency's chief information officer. In this role, I manage the toxic release inventory program and I serve as the information technology leader for the agency. My organization, the Office of Environmental Information, or OEI, supports the agency by integrating high-quality environmental information to make it useful for decision making, analysis, and measuring success. OEI's mission crosses all of the agency's offices and programs. We're responsible for bringing data into the agency from a variety of sources, ensuring data quality, access, integrity, and making strategic information technology investments. To successfully fulfill our mission, OEI must manage a variety of environmental information databases and information resources as well manage the information technology hardware and software that enables us to conduct our daily operations. Thanks to the technology advances of the past decade, we've made enormous strides toward delivering seamless reporting data and providing improved access to the agency's many valuable information resources.

One key point we're focusing on here today is the advance in information availability. At EPA, we're leading the federal government by increasing the availability, usability, and relevance of environmental information. We're improving the two-way flow of information to increase overall information transparency. We're committed to providing widespread access to information and increasing public participation, and we're equally intent on removing information barriers from overburdened communities.

Raising awareness about potential environmental hazards is an essential component of environmental justice. Environmental justice is a cornerstone for the agency. EPA defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal

access to decision-making processes to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

EPA understands that communities need effective tools and information to help them better understand the contextual connections between environmental efforts and health risks. To this point, EPA is in the forefront of providing such information through resource tools and making them useful and meaningful for overburdened communities. I'd like to tell you a little about the tools we've created in support of environmental justice concerns. One of the EPA's largest successes has been its premiere community right-to-know program, called the Toxics Release Inventory—or TRI for short—which just happens to be run out of my office. TRI provides communities with information about toxic chemical releases and waste management activities in order to support informed decision making in all levels of government, non-government, industry, and the public. TRI data is submitted by regulated facilities each year and is added to a database that contains detailed information on disposal or other releases of over 650 chemicals from thousands of U.S. facilities. In recent years, I'm proud to say that we've greatly increased our ability to provide the public with accelerated access to the TRI data. And we've substantially improved the quality and accuracy of the data by employing a wide assortment of electronic online information tools.

Also, EPA has created a number of electronic tools that provide a variety of ways to access and analyze information about national and local trends in toxic chemicals, and disposal or releases to the environment. In particular, I'd like to call to your attention a tool called "My Environment." My Environment is a particularly good starting point to learn about the environmental conditions of communities simply by inputting a zip code or a city name. This tool helps people learn about the quality of the water and the possible presence of toxic air pollutants and how different companies might be impacting their local communities. EPA is always looking for innovative ways to make information more readily available to the general public. One example of this is our most recently released TRI tool called myRTK, short for "My Right to Know." This new tool is designed to be used on mobile devices and is becoming very popular among environmental justice grass

roots organizations due to its ease of use and mapping capabilities. Now, imagine if you're riding along on a sunny day here in Mississippi with your window down, and you suddenly become aware of a smell coming from an industrial plant along the highway. You might want to know what kind of manufacturing process would result in such a bad smell or what kind of chemicals are being disposed of. Now, all you have to do is pull out the myRTK tool and you consult your mobile phone and find out more about it.

To consider particular environmental justice concerns, EPA provides a wide range of analytical and mapping tools to help overburdened communities understand environmental health impacts in their neighborhoods. EJ View is one such tool that allows communities to view environmental, demographic, and health data in their area. Various aspects of EPA's business such as emergency response and environmental reviews mandated under the National Environment Policy Act, or NEPA, are informed by the EJ reports generated by EJ View. Another major asset is EPA's envirofacts database, which supports EPA's stakeholders to query about EPA's regulated facility. Envirofacts supplies answers to questions about environmental compliance and to what extent does an industry comply with environmental regulations and permitting designed to protect neighboring communities who might otherwise be subjected to unregulated levels of pollution in its land, air, and water. And we're always looking into ways to increase our transparency and usefulness of information. In addition to all the agency's electronic information analysis tracking and mapping tools, we've come to recognize the importance of integrating various datasets to cut across typical federal, state, and local government areas of responsibility. Recently, we partnered with the enforcement office at EPA to develop a TRI comparative analysis tool, which allows users to compare TRI information with data from our air, water, and waste programs. And we're working to better engage the public on regulatory activities that may impact their communities. EPA, as an organization, sponsors regulations.gov and is leading the way for the entire federal government to be more transparent using this tool for rule-making activities. Through the use of video, webinars, and other social media tools, we're offering the

opportunity to understand the intent of the proposed regulation and invite input and comment before the regulation is finalized. Specifically, at EPA, we look at this as a way of expanding the conversation on environmentalism, which is a priority of our administrator, Lisa Jackson.

Moving into the future, we're currently looking into ways to better integrate our various EPA managed environmental databases and other information resources. An especially promising means of accessing some information is through an assortment of enhanced online mapping tools. We're investigating opportunities for partnering with other federal agencies to increase linkages with datasets and integrate data from a variety of sources together to ensure that communities can access and use all available information resources that impact the health and environment in which they live. And EPA is committed to developing a common mapping platform and a nationally consistent screening and targeting tool in order to enhance the agency's environmental justice, analysis, and decision making. Just this week, as I mentioned, I was in L.A. meeting with a leader at a mapping software company, looking for ways in which we can come up with common standards at a national level. This effort will make it easier for communities to better understand how EPA screens for potential environmental justice areas of concern. As one of the priority elements of EPA's *Plan EJ 2012*, this is an agency-wide plan focused on addressing environmental justice. Now, when it's implemented, it will further enhance our ability to provide accessible information and foster transparency.

I encourage you to look at these tools and discover what's in your own neighborhood. And use these tools the next time you research geographically-based environmental conditions. In closing, I want to thank you so much for this opportunity to speak to you today about the variety of EPA's information resource tools that promote and enhance environmental justice.

