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**Countdown to Full Implementation: 40 Months**

## **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING SYSTEM (CERS)**

### **BULLETIN #4**

### **UPA Help & Support Guide**

This bulletin provides an update to the Electronic Reporting Work Group and serves as an introduction to the UPA Help and Support Guide.

1. **Updates:** Information to help you implement electronic reporting in your jurisdiction.
2. **Action Items:** These are suggestions for actions that you should be taking RIGHT NOW.
3. **New FAQs:** Aimed at answering many of your questions.

Please send your comments and ideas to improve these bulletins to [cupa@calepa.ca.gov](mailto:cupa@calepa.ca.gov).

**Reminder:** January 1, 2013 all businesses and UPAs are required to report electronically.

#### **UPDATES**

- The work group continues to meet regularly via teleconference. The work group has developed a [Help and Support Guide for UPAs](#) available at [www.calepa.ca.gov/CUPA/EReporting](http://www.calepa.ca.gov/CUPA/EReporting). The scope of this document includes guidance to Cal/EPA and UPAs defining a support system for the implementation of CERS as well as discussion of various issues a UPA and regulated facilities may encounter in complying with electronic reporting requirements.
- CERS will go live the last week of September 2009. UPAs who currently utilize Unidocs Hazardous Material Online Information Project (HMOIP) will be able to use CERS immediately. All data from Unidocs HMOIP will be moved to CERS.
- Unidocs HMOIP users will be able to input data up to September 16, 2009. All data will be moved to CERS on or about September 20, 2009. Cal/EPA will send user credentials for CERS by email in mid September to the current Unidocs HMOIP users. Cal/EPA will also activate these user accounts the last week of September.
- UPAs will need to have a process in place to validate the basic facility information of new CERS users. Beginning in early 2010, businesses will be able to enter information into CERS, but actual electronic submission of regulatory reports will be controlled by the UPAs. Some UPAs are already accepting electronic submissions, but most will phase in over the next 3 years.
- The distribution plan to allocate funds collected from the electronic reporting surcharge has been approved by UPAAG and is now going to the Secretary of Cal/EPA for approval before general publication. Additional information will be sent in a future bulletin.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- UPAs should plan to take a look around CERS after it goes live. All UPAs will have at least one person with management access to CERS by the end of September. This person will be the gate keeper for the UPA for all issues dealing with CERS and will control local regulator access. Cal/EPA was in touch with all the UPAs in early September to ask for this contact information.
- UPAs should review the Help and Support Guide. It contains valuable information and guidance for UPAs concerning support for businesses.

## NEW FAQs

Q.8: What will happen to Unidocs after September 2009?

A.8: Unidocs, the web site, will continue as it was originally designed: as a resource for standardized forms, guidelines, procedures and, in some cases, policies for the local area. The documents should continue to be available to anyone whether they are a member agency or not, which is current site policy.

Q.9: I already have data in Unidocs HMOIP. What will happen to it after September 2009?

A.9: All data that is currently in Unidocs HMOIP will be moved into CERS. Data in Unidocs HMOIP will be available for a time after September 2009. At some point, the Santa Clara County Fire Chiefs Association will make decisions on what to do with Unidocs HMOIP and the data stored in it.

Q.10: I'm thinking of initiating a pilot project for a few select businesses in my jurisdiction. When would I be able to allow the pilot businesses to upload their data to CERS and submit it to my jurisdiction?

A.10: The CERS application will be available for these kinds of pilot testing activities in the late fall 2009. You will need to communicate with the Unified Program Office to coordinate this kind of activity.

Q.11: How can CERS be used by businesses in UPA jurisdictions which aren't accepting electronic submissions?

A.11: Regulated businesses will be able to enter data into CERS and print out the standard Unified Program Consolidated Forms to mail, fax or email to those UPAs who are not yet able to receive data electronically.

Q.12: How will business users get access to CERS and get their regulatory information into CERS?

A.12: There are two questions here. The answer to the first question depends on a number of things, like where the business is located, whether it is a multi-jurisdictional business, and is the local regulatory agency already using CERS. The answer to the second question depends on how the local regulatory agency is currently storing required filings.

### Where the business is located?

If your business is located in the jurisdiction of a regulatory agency that is not using CERS at the present time, you may go to the CERS web site and request access as a business. This will require you to provide some basic identity information and to follow the steps to activate your user identity (this will be an email address). Once your user identity is activated, the local regulatory agency will validate your identity using their local processes and approve your access using the facility information you provided. This authorization allows you to enter and manage your business information in CERS.

However, this does not mean that the local regulatory agency has authorized you to file electronically. At this point you can use CERS as your tool to store regulatory information for your business. You will be able to print formal state forms that the local regulatory agency will accept and you will be able to edit your information at any time. Once your local regulatory agency accepts electronic filing, you will be able to "Submit" your stored data with a single button.

If your business is located in a jurisdiction that has or is establishing its own reporting website, you will need to get access to that website by using the local process. If you are not a multi-jurisdictional business, it is to your advantage to use the local reporting website because it will probably provide you with value added options that CERS can not provide. In this case, the local system will share its data with the state system automatically.

### Are you a multi-jurisdictional business?

If your company has businesses in more than one local regulatory agency, your company will have to phase in reporting as the individual local regulatory agencies activate their electronic reporting capability. Cal/EPA is partnering with several large multi-jurisdictional businesses to pilot test this process in the fall and winter of 2009. We will then publish guidelines for the multi-jurisdictional businesses.

Is your regulatory agency already using CERS?

There are a number of local regulatory agencies already actively using CERS. If your business is in such a jurisdiction, you can follow the steps discussed above and immediately begin "Submitting" your regulatory information. However, if you are also a multi-jurisdictional business you will only be able to file electronically for those locations within the jurisdiction of the local regulatory agency already using CERS. The other locations must continue to follow local regulatory agency filing rules for those jurisdictions until they begin accepting electronic filings.

How does my regulatory information get into CERS?

As noted above, this depends on how the local regulatory agency is currently storing required filings. Most local regulatory agencies are storing filings as paper, just the way they are submitted, and have not entered much of the data into any electronic management system. In this case, the information will be captured from the paper and converted into data that can be loaded into CERS. The first time you get access to CERS and provide a location address, it will be matched to the data that was loaded and you will be able to edit and verify the information. In those jurisdictions where they have already loaded information into their local data systems, it will be uploaded to CERS and the process will be similar to that described above.

Q.13: How does a UPA apply for electronic reporting funding support?

A.13: All UPAs will be required to submit an Implementation Plan that lays out how they will bring about full electronic reporting by 2013. This Implementation Plan will include documentation of the necessary funding support through Services and Grants. Cal/EPA will review and approve these implementation plans and enter into agreements for the Services and Grants. These agreements and the Grants in the Implementation Plan are the tools that will be used to provide funding support. As with virtually all state grants, invoices will be used to reimburse UPAs for approved expenditures. Cal/EPA is currently developing a template for the Implementation Plan. Most of the actual processes must still be developed. Cal/EPA has several new positions that will be dedicated to developing and managing these processes. The Implementation Plan template and other products will be placed on the Unified Program electronic reporting web site as they are developed.