Talking points:

Earlier this week, Monsanto reported to the EPA in compliance with annual Community Right-to-Know laws, releases and transfers of 52.2 million pounds of reportable wastes in 1994 compared with 84.4 million pounds in 1993.

Most of this change is attributable to the EPA's delisting of a few low-toxicity chemicals, primarily, ammonium sulfate. All chemicals on the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) are treated equally so that a pound of a salt is counted the same as a pound of a carcinogen. This misleading accounting has pressured manufacturers, including Monsanto, to reduce low toxicity wastes to drive the big numbers down -- resources which would be better used to reduce more hazardous waste streams. By delisting Ammonium sulfate and the few other compounds, EPA is improving the TRI data base by focusing the public's attention on chemicals which are more toxic and should be a greater priority.

Even though some of these high volume waste streams are no longer reportable, the company still has efforts underway to reduce them in keeping with its ongoing waste reduction commitments. The Monsanto $1 Million Challenge, announced last year, seeks a way to recover ammonia from high volume salt streams and recycle it back into the process. The winning proposal, now under development, looks promising.

A number of real reductions have also been achieved over the past year. For instance the W.G. Krummrich plant in Sauget, Ill. recovered for sale an additional 1.7 million pounds of hydrochloric acid previously sent offsite for neutralization; the NutraSweet plant in Augusta, Ga. treated more than 600,000 pounds of methanol on-site, reducing the amount released; and the Luling, La. plant reduced the emission of methyl chloride by almost 600,000 pounds with the installation of a thermal oxidizer.