



Data Dissemination Practices

BEA and the Department of Commerce have long-standing procedures that are designed to ensure that data dissemination to all interested members of the public occurs simultaneously. Furthermore, these procedures preserve the distinction between the policy-neutral release of data by statistical agencies and their interpretation by policy officials. The objectivity of BEA estimates is also fostered by the publication of methodologies and assumptions that allow a large number of economists and policy officials to replicate the estimates and thereby provide an independent check on the credibility and objectivity of the estimates. The BEA procedures adhere to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards for data dissemination as described in "Statistical Policy Directive on the Compilation, Release and Evaluation of Principal Federal Economic Indicators", commonly known as Statistical Policy Directive No. 3. Although the Directive is aimed at principal economic indicators, a subset of economic indicators, the BEA procedures apply to all of the statistics it produces.

At BEA, strict procedures are followed to ensure that data are not disseminated before the official release time, except as authorized under Statistical Policy Directive No. 3. In order to protect its data from early release BEA:

- 1) Releases the data according to an announced schedule that minimizes the risk of pre-release access and instills confidence in the integrity of the data. The schedule is promulgated at least one year in advance and is immutable.
- 2) Limits access to data prior to release only to those with a clear need to know. There is no pre-release access or review outside of BEA by policy officials (all BEA staff are career employees) of the estimates, press release, or other materials related to the estimates.
- 3) Provides physical and computer security necessary to limit access to those with a need to know. (See the "Integrity" section of the Information Quality Guidelines.)
- 4) Ensures that no BEA employee inadvertently provides pre-release data to the media.

As provided for in Statistical Policy Directive No. 3, pre-release of principal economic indicators, GDP, Personal Income and Corporate Profits, is provided to the President through the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors. This release occurs only after the data have been approved and finalized within BEA and copies of materials for public release have been prepared.

Within one hour before the scheduled time of a news/public release of any data, the information to be released may be provided to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs and other Commerce Department policy officials in a lock-up environment.

There is no external communication of information from the lock-up until the time of public release.

Within one hour before the scheduled time of a release, representatives of the news media may be permitted to read and review the news release and related documentation in a lock-up environment. There is no external communication of information from the lock-up until the time of public release.

Link to BEA security document (<http://www.bea.gov/bea/about/security-release-procedures.pdf>) Link to OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 3
(<http://www.bea.gov/bea/about/federalregister09251985.pdf>)