



It's never too late to send us a copy of your data sets and RO data. This small effort now can save you time and a significant effort later. Providing us with updated data helps to ensure we're testing the formats being used and is beneficial in case there is an instance when you need to contact Customer Service. The preferred method for sending us data is on CD, but we can also receive zip files via email – just make sure to call us first to make sure the file isn't too large to receive through our ISP & to let us know it's being sent!

By the way, we now have high speed internet access through a local cable company to make it easier to send and receive data.

**Happy  
New  
Year**

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## VE-PROMS 2003 Upgrade

Volian considers it extremely important to keep VE-PROMS, our premier software product, up to current technologies. This includes keeping it up to date with current trends in the Microsoft Windows world. As mentioned in the July newsletter, we believe that it's necessary to migrate VE-PROMS to 32-bit in order to provide users with a system that takes advantage of all of the technical advancements that have been made during the past few years. The July newsletter also discusses why Volian considers this migration to be so important and the advantages of this migration for you. (If you haven't seen the July newsletter, you can get a copy off of our web site at [www.volian.com](http://www.volian.com) or contact us and we will send you a copy.) The 2002 upgrade began this process by migrating the RO-Editor to a 32-bit environment. We used Microsoft's .NET development platform as the architecture of the product. This upgrade included a new user-friendly interface and also allowed for use of more current and industry accepted database technologies, i.e. Microsoft Access.

For the 2003 upgrade, we performed an evaluation of scope and resource requirements for the migration of the entire VE-PROMS system to a 32-bit system and began the migration effort of VE-PROMS. (Keep in mind that the ROEditor is a subset of what the entire VE-PROMS system encompasses.) As part of this evaluation, costs, timing, and risk factors were considered. The evaluation led us to realize that the best path was to migrate the product in phases.

We are now in the process of converting the DMAS module that include functions such as Add/Modify/Delete Procedures, Archiving, etc. to a 32-bit program. A new user interface that is similar to the RO Editor, as well as many other 'browser' type tools such as Windows Explorer was created. Additional functionality is being added to allow you to add datapaths through the program and allow the addition of new plant level directories. This year's upgrade will not require a database conversion. Part of the upgrade work included developing database accessing code to the current database files which allows the phased migration approach. When the majority of the system is migrated, the database will be converted to those supported by OLE DB with ADO.NET (Microsoft Access, SQL Server, etc).

Future phases will upgrade the remaining modules as well as the underlying database to 32-bit.

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## **The Uses of the Archive Function in VE-PROMS**

The Archive Utility in DMAS has two main options:

Full Archive:

- Use it to create a Zip file containing a snapshot of your data set before making procedure modifications or running a maintenance tool.
- Use it as a rollback function. You can easily restore the procedure set back to when the Zip file (snapshot) was made.

Partial Archive:

- Use it to create a Zip file containing just a selected procedure and the supporting files needed to bring up that procedure in VE-PROMS.
- This option is useful if you are having problems with a procedure and need us to take a look at it. Sending a partial zip file gives us the minimum files needed to trouble shoot the problem.
- We do not recommend creating a partial archive for use as backups or snapshots with the intention of possibly rolling back. Please use the Full Archive for that purpose.

### **Saving the Archive Files on removable media**

Whether you use the DMAS Archive Utility, WinZip®, or some other archiving utility, we recommend saving Zip files (archives) of all of your procedure data, including those not maintained in VE-PROMS, on some kind of removable media. Even if your IT group backs up your data on a regular basis, it's a good idea to compliment their efforts with your own backups. If, for example, your data is on a network drive and something bad happens such that the network will not be available for days, you could install VE-PROMS locally, use your backups to load data locally, and thus continue to work.

These days, the CD is a media of choice for storage. But it does have one drawback. When files are placed on a CD (CD-R) their attributes are set to Read Only. If you copy a file from a CD, it will automatically have the Read Only attribute set. You will need to manually turn off the read only attribute on all of the files you copied. To resolve this problem, save Zip files to the CD (CD-R). You can unzip the files directly from the CD drive. The files that are unzipped will not automatically have the Read Only attribute set. Instead, they will have their original attributes as they were when the Zip file was created.

An alternative to CDs would be to use memory sticks or a memory card reader that plugs into your computer's USB port. It will appear as disk drive on your computer and you can use it as such.

The memory sticks are simply computer memory chips in a plastic case. Everything is self-contained.

The memory card readers are really designed to read memory cards that are used by digital cameras, but it turns out that you can also write to the memory cards through the "reader". You can then keep a memory card reader/writer plugged into your computer (via the USB port) and use multiple memory cards to store data backups.

## Welcome Callaway

We would like to welcome the Callaway nuclear plant into the VE-PROMS family. Callaway will be using VE-PROMS to upgrade their EOPs in 2004. They selected VE-PROMS over a number of other choices including Microsoft Word and Adobe FrameMaker. They are the 33<sup>rd</sup> nuclear plant site to buy VE-PROMS.

Note that Callaway has requested a unique implementation of having the Referenced Objects database stored in a SQL 2000 database. This functionality will be provided to them in early 2004.

## Engineering Workforce Management Paper

Rich Mark of Volian co-authored a paper with Adriene Allen from Rochester Gas and Electric that was presented at the recent 2003 Primavera conference. Primavera is the developer of a high-end project management software application used throughout industry. The paper entitled "Maximize Project Value – Engineering Workforce Management" discussed how the Engineering Workforce Management System in place at the Ginna nuclear power plant integrates with Primavera (a comprehensive project management system) to allow RGE management to schedule and utilize resources more effectively.

If you or someone at your plant would like copy of the presentation, please give us a call and we'll be glad to send it to you. A copy of the paper will also be placed on our web site shortly.

## VE-PROMS Tips and Tricks

As part of the 2002 VE-PROMS upgrade, the RO database was converted to a Microsoft Access database. As you add, modify, and delete data and objects in the RO database, the database file will grow in size and may become fragmented. In fact, Microsoft Access keeps old data records in the database, even the records that were deleted. In time, this will adversely affect the performance of the database and the RO Editor.

To improve performance, we highly recommend that the ROMASTER.MDB file be "Compacted" using the "Compact and Repair" tool found on the Tools menu in Microsoft Access 2000 or XP. (Microsoft Access is included with Microsoft Office Professional edition.) Compacting the Access file removes unused records and verifies the file is in good working order. In general, the "Compact and Repair" function optimizes the performance of Access databases.

To "Compact and Repair" the RO database, Perform the following:

- Ensure that no one is in the RO database.
- Make a backup copy of the ROMASTER.MDB file.
- Start Microsoft Access and open the database file ROMASTER.MDB.
- From the Menu Bar, Select "Tools", "Database Utilities", then "Compact and Repair Database". This should complete within a few seconds, depending on the size of the database and how much work has been done in the ROs.
- Exit Microsoft Access. (No saving of the file is necessary)
- Verify the ROMASTER.MDB file is in working order (Startup the RO Editor).
- Delete the backup copy of the database file.

If you are uncertain on this process, just give us a call and we'll be glad to walk you through it.

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## **VE-PROMS Tools and Functionality – Managed Links**

One of the big differences between VE-PROMS and lesser procedure maintenance systems such as Microsoft Word or Framemaker is how VE-PROMS manages the hyperlinks utilized within the procedure content. In VE-PROMS, the linking information is retained in separate databases. “Managed links” allows VE-PROMS to perform some of the following features:

- Tracks the beginning and end locations of each link
- Resolves potential inconsistencies when the end location of a link is deleted
- Identifies conflicts between approved procedures
- Makes the linking process easy by using menus
- Records the change history of the links

Examples of where VE-PROMS manages hyperlinks are Referenced Objects, Library documents, and transitions. This capability is helpful to the procedure writers in allowing them to produce numerous reports quickly and easily that assist them in improving the overall quality of the procedures. For example, the transition report shows the links between the procedures. Thus this report would help the procedure writer ensure that the entry condition section is accurate. Other software products may have some mechanism to link to a step within the document, but try getting anywhere near the “managed link” capabilities described above. Good Luck!

Figures used in procedures maintained in VE-PROMS are connected from the Referenced Objects database to the procedures through managed links. This is the mechanism used by VE-PROMS to give the procedure writer control of what is in the procedure. VE-PROMS does not permit the linking to data outside the control of VE-PROMS since that would relinquish the control that the procedure writer has over their procedures.

Volian has taken “managed links” even further with our Master/Slave functionality that will allow the procedure writer to maintain multiple procedures that are very similar using one “master” procedure file. The most obvious example of this would be maintaining similar procedures at a dual unit site where the main differences between the procedures would be unit numbers and equipment designations. However, there are other applications as well. For example, one plant uses this functionality to maintain their Instrument Failure Guide procedures where up to eight procedures (four per unit) are maintained in one “master” procedure.

The RO Usage reports provides information to the user on which ROs are used in a procedure and which procedures use specific ROs. This information is extremely useful when trying to determine the scope of a RO change. For example, if a minor plant modification results in a change to the maximum RCS pressure for RHR operation, the RO Usage report can be used to let the procedure writer know which procedures will have to be revised and reissued.

If you don’t currently use the report functions in VE-PROMS very often, try them out. They could save you time in performing your procedure maintenance functions.

## **VE-PROMS Training: Customized to Fit Your Needs**

There are numerous reasons why VE-PROMS training may be needed. For many, it is due to general personnel turnover that occurs. For some, it may be that training is needed to fully utilize all of the features of VE-PROMS. For others, there may be specialized training on the role of a VE-PROMS administrator or training on a specific feature of VE-PROMS, such as ROs.

If you have the need for VE-PROMS training, give us a call and we will work with you to determine the most appropriate type of training. You can also decide if you want the training on-site or at the Volian office.