

## Multimedia Subcommittee

### Key Functions of Small Business Environmental Assistance Programs (SBEAPs)

Small Business Environmental Assistance Programs (SBEAPs) serve as an effective and necessary link between businesses and the environmental regulatory programs. Below is a summary of the key functions of SBEAPs.

**Coordinator** - SBEAPs act as a one-stop shop for questions and permit coordination. Instead of the small business owner having to contact each regulatory program about its potential requirements, the SBEAP packages that information together for the small business. For example, the company proposing to install a coating operation can get information about air permits and waste regulations by making just one call to the SBEAP.

**Liaison** – SBEAPs serve as the voice of small business during the development of new regulations. Most small business owners cannot take the time to attend technical advisory group meetings or other rule development meetings to provide input on rules being developed, but they can work through the SBEAP to make sure their concerns are addressed. It is difficult for regulatory agencies to truly assess impact of new environmental regulations on small businesses without input from the SBEAPs.

**Partner** - SBEAPs work together with trade associations, chambers of commerce and other business groups to market and sponsor workshops and conferences, to distribute information to the business community about environmental regulations, and to identify concerns of the industry.

**Pioneers** - SBEAPs often provide outreach to and improve compliance of business not traditionally seen by the regulators. For example, auto body and printing shops are often quite low on the priority list for inspections but do have the potential to impact public health and the environment.

**Supporter of Regulatory Programs** - Much of what the SBEAP does supports and benefits the state environmental regulatory programs.

- Outreach is a proactive approach to compliance assistance. It reduces the amount of staff time and resources required to resolve violations.
- Outreach strengthens the enforcement position of regulatory programs. Business can't use the excuse they were not aware of the regulation when they were given the opportunity to attend training or receive publications explaining the requirements.
- Environmental regulatory staff have more time to issue permits and conduct inspections because requests for general information can be handled by the SBEAP in a more efficient and coordinated manner.

**Translator** – SBEAPs convert environmental regulations into terms that small businesses can understand. Most small businesses just want to know what they need to do.

## **Environmental Compliance Assistance Tools**

Small Business Environmental Assistance Programs (SBEAPs) that have funding to offer compliance assistance on all environmental regulations are offering innovative services that are well received by small businesses. Below is a summary of those environmental compliance assistance tools being utilized by some states' SBEAP.

### **Fact Sheets / Calendars**

Innovation is the driving force behind the various documents developed by SBEAPs to help small business understand and comply with the environmental regulations. An easy-to-read fact sheet can take the mystery out of the storage requirements for hazardous waste or calculating the air emissions from an emergency generator. Compliance calendars have been created for many small business sectors. They can help a small business satisfy their weekly or monthly recordkeeping requirements by allowing them to enter the data right into the calendar. Directories of equipment manufacturers and distributors and consulting services are valuable resources for business needing additional assistance.

### **Mentoring Programs**

For small businesses that need assistance from licensed professionals, some SBEAPs are offering environmental mentor programs. The mentors include attorneys, engineers, consultants, and licensed wastewater operators that donate their time to give hands-on compliance assistance to small businesses and local governments that may not otherwise be able to afford consultant services.

### **On-site Compliance Visits**

SBEAPs are providing free and confidential on-site compliance visits to small businesses that can't afford to hire a consultant or don't have the time and resources to monitor environmental regulatory changes that directly affect their business operations and practices. The purpose of these walk through visits is to identify and help a business understand all of their air, water, and waste regulatory obligations. SBEAP professionals can help a business with a particular concern they have, such as filing an environmental permit or completing a report, or they can assess the environmental compliance of the entire facility.

The SBEAP's follow-up report will include compliance options and pollution prevention opportunities that will increase the efficiency of the business thus saving them money. The information obtained by the SBEAP is not shared with the regulatory agency's enforcement staff. The benefits to a small business participating in such a visit can include being better prepared for inspections by regulatory staff; reducing the potential of future environmental liability and related noncompliance penalties; reduced waste of raw materials; and savings of time and money.

### **Permit Coordination Meetings**

A new business coming into a state will want to know what environmental permits are required before they break ground. The SBEAP often facilitates meetings between the

business and representatives from the various regulatory programs. This meeting is valuable to both the business and agency. As a result of the meeting, the business will avoid violating rules and submit a more complete application thus streamlining the agency's permit review process.

### **Phone Center / Hotline**

Phone centers serve as a single point of entry into all of the state environmental agency's programs. By dialing a toll free number, businesses receive one-on-one assistance from compliance assistance staff or are referred to a network of technical staff within the environmental regulatory agency. In addition to answering incoming questions, phone centers provide information to the customer on agency-sponsored environmental education events, and recommend guidebooks, fact sheets and other publications on a wide array of environmental topics.

Commercial software is used through which compliance assistance staff easily assign and track calls through to resolution. Use of the software also creates a database of responses to frequently asked questions, and the ability to extract performance metrics for reporting purposes. It is an effective business management tool that directs customers to the appropriate staff and provides consistent and correct information on all regulatory programs administered by the agency.

### **Self Audit Guidebooks and Checklists**

Many SBEAPs participate in their state's Environmental Result Programs (ERP). The ERP, an innovative idea that originated in Massachusetts' Department of Environmental Protection and is now spreading across the county, is a three-part compliance assistance plan that enables businesses to conduct their own environmental self audits.

The first part of the plan is the development and distribution of a simple but comprehensive workbook that business owners use to educate themselves on the regulatory requirements as well as pollution prevention ideas. The workbook includes a self audit checklist that cross-references the standards. Secondly, the facility either certifies compliance with the standards on the checklist or if problems are found, develops a return-to-compliance plan. This self certification covers all air, water, and waste standards.

Performance measurement is the third and final component of the ERP. Prior to the beginning of an ERP, randomly selected facilities within a particular sector are inspected in order to establish a baseline of performance. Following the subsequent use of the self audit and certification by these facilities, another set of inspections are conducted and the results are compared for a statistically valid look at performance improvement.

### **Workshops / Training**

Another effective way to improve small businesses' understanding of their environmental obligations is through low cost, high quality workshops and conferences. These training events can be custom-tailored to provide the optimum learning environment and outcome. For instance, a workshop can focus on a specific regulatory program such as air permitting; or combine an overview of the air, water, and waste requirements of a particular industry sector.

SBEAPS often work closely with the state environmental regulatory programs in developing the agenda, producing training materials, and selecting presenters. Many SBEAPs have had a great response to training events consisting of concurrent sessions on a variety of environmental topics that the attendee can choose from.

The variety and effectiveness of training methods continues to grow. The SBEAPs often conduct training at the small business' sites or at a conference center targeting a business sector or specific regulatory program. Some SBEAPS invite businesses to attend satellite training offered through US EPA. Training videos created by SBEAPs and posted on their compliance assistance web site allows the business owner to learn about regulations in the privacy of their office or home any time during the day.