

Technical Assistance 101: Tips and Tricks for Successful Outreach Campaigns for Conditionally Exempt Hazardous Waste Generators

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Abstract

This presentation is for people looking for concrete steps on how to design and carry out effective technical assistance campaigns. Participants will hear about a systematic approach (and its variations) that's been developed and refined by the Business Pollution Prevention Team in Thurston County, Washington. The initial focus will be on how-to's for running "single industry outreach campaigns", followed by information on inspection programs for "geographic areas" such as watershed basins or wellhead protection areas.

Participants will walk away with a checklist on how to research, plan, communicate, conduct field visits, manage data, evaluate results, and prepare a report for a technical assistance campaign. As well, we will walk through a tool box of inspection forms, compliance notices, Best Management Practices checklists, customer survey forms, self-report forms, a risk matrix, and a summary report outline.

Checklist for Conducting Technical Assistance Campaigns

PLANNING

Write down who your target audience is and why you want to focus on them.

Create a timeline with key tasks.

Research and create an accurate mailing list.

Learn about the target audience.

- Find out about the hazardous products they use and what wastes they create.
- Find out what BMPs are commonly practiced and what BMPs are cutting edge.
- Research if there are barriers for them to practice BMPs and other waste reduction.
- Find out where they get hazardous waste and environmental information.
- Talk to individuals in target audience about their knowledge of hazardous waste.
- Talk to other organizations that have experience with outreach to this sector, including product and waste disposal vendors.

Identify if other agencies regulate this sector and work together as appropriate.

Fine-tune what you want to accomplish with this outreach campaign and what methods you will use.

- Write down what exactly you want to accomplish.

- Is this a non-regulatory campaign, compliance program or a mix?
- Is this a one time effort, or will you continue to work with this audience into the future?
- Will you do drop in site visits or will you schedule appointments?
- Will you write up something at the end of the visit to leave with the business?
- Will you write a detailed follow up letter after the site visit?
- Will you schedule follow up visits to observe compliance or BMP practices?

Define what kind of outreach materials will work best.

- Invitation letters, BMP checklists, fact sheets, notices of compliance, notices of violation.
- Will you do any type of recognition for businesses participating in the program?

Define what information you need to collect to evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach.

- What specific questions are you going to answer with this campaign?
- Who will find this information valuable?
- How will you manage the information?
- Design field forms (site inventory form, BMPs checklist, compliance checklist)
- Will you ask businesses to complete a customer survey?
- Will you ask businesses to sign a pledge?

Define all the different tasks and ask for help if you need it.

- Research the audience; write forms and fact sheets, schedule appointments, do site visits, data input and analysis, write evaluation report.

Revise timeline and tasks with dates and names.

LOGISTICS

Print the forms, fact sheets, and other written materials you will need.

If you will be scheduling visits rather than doing unannounced drop-in visits:

- Prepare and complete mailing for the announcement/invitation letter
- Telephone the businesses to set up appointments (if you will be scheduling visits rather than doing unannounced drop-in visits).

Prepare a spreadsheet or database for data input and tracking.

SITE VISITS

When you first arrive:

- Explain how long the visit will take and what you want to talk about and take a look at.
- Explain why your organization does pollution prevention work.

Conduct interview and inspection

- Ask “basic” questions about the site

(correct address, property owner, water source, sewer, septic, past businesses at the site, floor drains, oil/water separator, hydraulic lifts, spill kits, etc).

- Walk the site. Ask questions, listen, record observations about storage, BMPs, disposal.
- Discuss what you saw that was good, and what needs attention.
- Explain exactly what needs to be done to come into compliance or make improvements.

Wrap Up

- Review what must be done to gain compliance, what voluntarily can be done for BMPs.
- Explain what your next steps will be and the time frame for letters or next visits.
- Give the site representative a copy of any information or notices you want to leave.

Complete field notes and forms shortly after finishing each visit.

FOLLOW UP TO INITIAL VISIT

Input data into your tracking spreadsheet or database. Keep hard files organized.

When sites do not require follow up, you may have a customer survey or some type of recognition to give them or send them.

For sites that need follow up...

- If questions came up during the visit, do research and follow up with the answers.
- If you intend to do a follow up visit to observe compliance changes (and you didn't leave a compliance notice at the end of the visit), you should send a letter that spells out what needs to be done by what deadline, and when your next visit will be.
- More than one follow up visit may be needed for complicated or expensive compliance issues.
- If you do follow ups to observe changes in the use of BMPs, wait a reasonable amount of time for the participants to try out the new BMPs.
- At the completion of follow up visits, you may have a customer survey or some type of recognition to give or send them.

EVALUATION

Review the questions you are trying to answer with this campaign. What else did you learn that should be included in the evaluation?

Complete data input and analysis.

Organize and summarize data

- Spell out the questions you set out to answer and what you learned.
- Spell out the benefits gained by this campaign.
- Describe the lessons you learned, trends you saw, surprises.

Share results.