

EPA NE Experiences in Municipal Assistance

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Ancient history

- Involvement with municipalities predates NEEATeam (early 90's)
- Origins in wastewater permitting program and solid waste program
- Regulatory, assistance, and grantmaking intermingled
- Lots of one-on-one

Epochs

- WWTP operators: meeting discharge limits, financial management, energy efficiency, conflict management
- Directors/Administrators: general environmental issues & management
- Highway supers/foremen: managing wastes, cost-effective P2 alternatives, recycling, worker health
- DPW/Planning/Building: Storm water overview, WWTPs, highway garages, IDDE, construction/development

Insights gained

- Unrealistic, confusing requirements
- Juggling competing demands
- Less EPA \$\$ but no infrastructure planning
- Schools, police and fire get all the love
- Need more professional respect
- Union contract terms and staff/management conflict are barriers
- ? "Just do it anyway" won't work

Relationships build projects

- Use old relationships
- Ask them to use their network (e.g., other NE APWA officers)
- Follow up calls to pre-market
- Present idea at regular meeting
- Ask for endorsement
- Pre-market more to broader group via their newsletters, events

Attitudes build projects

- "Heads up" on new regs, initiatives
- "How to stay out of trouble"
- Ask questions
- Visit their facilities
- Admire their expertise
- Learn the lingo
- Make allies of their vendors

Site visits

- Learning visit
- Tour the facility
- Take your time
- Meet different staff, managers
- Follow with thank-you letter
- Suggestions & praise
- Cc: anybody they want you to

Research

- Mesh interagency perspectives
- Environmental & worker health connection
- Costs of desired changes
- How to procure materials & equipment
- Maintenance needs

Workshops

- Familiar training provider (e.g., Local Roads programs)
- Familiar meeting sites
- Where will they really drive to?
- Speakers from communities, related agencies
- Massage your speakers

Messages

- “One stop shopping”: multi-agency, multi-media
- Regulators have a sense of humor and can talk
- How do I sell this to the selectmen?
- Trying this can make you a leader, not a martyr

Afterward

- Thanks to speakers and their bosses
- Phone calls: intended and actual changes
- Keep them in the loop

Other tools

- Simple written tools: fact sheets, models and checklists
- Use color, space and funny pictures
- Draw clear line between “should/could” and “must”

DON'Ts

- Get too far ahead of new regs
- Set a strong “or else” tone
- Hold up bad communities as examples
- Bureauspeak, Regspeak
- Persist with impractical P2 options— need to be practical, cheap, and/or satisfy regs
- Force a speaker to mouthe a message

More DON'Ts

- Long workshops that last beyond 3:00
- No elbow room
- Inadequate food and coffee
- Mega-conferences
- Elaborate eval forms
- Vendor presentations

DPW Audit Initiative

- 3rd stage of “integrated” approach to DPWs—assistance, enforcement, 2nd chance to comply
- NE APWA visible partner
- 1 big meeting and 3 workshops
- Lots of hand-holding: build trust, clarify, correct, fill out app together

DPW Audit Initiative

- 1 full time staff for 3+ years, legal support, consultant to doeval
- Budget process slowed changes
- Only 13% of universe participated (322 apps), but non-participants made changes
- Broader reach than inspections or “ripple effect”

DPW Audit Initiative

- Towns need consultant help—self-audits not thorough, blind to problems, embarrassed to finger peers
- How much success was due to prior outreach, recent enforcement, or nature of program?