



**AIR POLLUTION
CONTROL DISTRICT**
COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

TO: Board of Directors, Air Pollution Control District

FROM: Larry R. Allen, Air Pollution Control Officer

DATE: March 24, 2004

SUBJECT: Business Assistance

SUMMARY

APCD staff work with city and county building departments to disseminate information about air quality regulations early in the project planning process. Meetings with permit applicants are held to explain applicable rules and encourage the implementation of pollution prevention strategies. Technical assistance is provided to applicants and existing permit holders to help them find feasible ways to reduce air contaminant emissions.

RECOMMENDATION

That your Board receive and file the information provided.

DISCUSSION

The Air Pollution Control District is charged with protecting public health through protection and enhancement of air quality in San Luis Obispo County. We successfully accomplish this goal by working with our customers - the businesses we regulate and the public we serve. The District's Business Assistance Program is designed to further these cooperative relationships by helping businesses access a variety of compliance assistance resources.

Federal, state and local air pollution control regulations can be complex and difficult to understand for many businesses, and small firms often cannot afford to hire a consultant to help them understand the regulations and how to comply with them. These businesses need an advocate to help them quickly comprehend the applicable regulations and implement the most cost-effective compliance strategy. The District created a Small Business Ombudsman in 1996 to fill this need. The role of the Ombudsman is to ensure that regulations are applied fairly and with consideration of their effect on the business community, and to provide personal assistance to those in need of guidance on compliance. While Dean Carlson is our lead staff in this effort, each member of the APCD staff is a business assistance advocate.

The APCD staff has the expertise and the experience to provide technical assistance that can help a business reduce their pollutant emissions. We have worked with many local businesses on

pollution prevention (P2) projects that have not only reduced environmental impacts, but also cut costs and improved the quality of the product being produced! The many P2 success stories we have witnessed through the years demonstrate that good environmental stewardship also makes good business sense. Our desire is to work cooperatively with businesses to help them improve their efficiency while also minimizing their impact on the environment.

Direct assistance to new and expanding businesses is often provided during the plan review or permit evaluation stages. Meetings or site visits are encouraged to get applicants the information they need early in their planning process. The annual permit renewal inspection offers another opportunity for our staff to review new or revised regulations and discuss pollution prevention strategies with our permit holders. This educational process is a two-way street, with facility operators frequently showing or informing staff of new emission reduction strategies that we can later share with other businesses.

A key accomplishment for our business assistance program has been the substantial streamlining of our permitting procedures to make it easier and faster to get a permit. Applications have been simplified, equipment specific forms were developed and detailed instructions have been created to assist applicants. A Start-Up Authorization process has also been developed to meet the need for “instant permits” for some types of equipment used in projects that have short lead times. Most of this information is now available on the APCD website, including the District’s CEQA Handbook, rules and regulations, downloadable forms and links to other information sources.

These efforts have resulted in very positive working relationships with our stakeholders, improved their understanding and compliance with regulations, and facilitated the active participation and cooperation of the local business community in implementing the emission reduction strategies needed to attain the state ozone standard. This collaboration was instrumental in achieving this recent success, and will be critical to our ability to preserve it in the face of new public health mandates and declining fiscal resources. Building relationships, working cooperatively on innovative solutions, and treating all businesses with respect and consideration will continue to be key trademarks of our Business Assistance Program.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The District works closely with City and County building and planning departments to inform new and expanding businesses of environmental regulations, and stays abreast of business assistance programs and resources at the state and federal level.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

No financial considerations are associated with this information item.