

WATER AIR LAND

Customer Services Division Fact Sheet DEQ Focus On Serving The Customer

When the Oklahoma Department was formed in 1993, the Oklahoma legislature mandated that the agency be responsive to the people of the state. The DEQ responded by forming a division that is devoted to customer services. DEQ customers include citizens, industry, local governments, and other divisions within the DEQ. The Customer Assistance Program (CAP), of the Customer Services Division, has developed unique, innovative, non-regulatory programs designed to meet the needs of a divergent customer base. Former Executive Director, Mark Coleman states that, "The success of the Customer Services Division has changed the way the entire agency looks at its role in serving the citizens of the state. We really all are becoming more aware of our role as public servants and our responsibility to be responsive to customer needs."

Industrial Customers:

CAP service to the regulated community includes general permit and compliance assistance, small business assistance, and pollution prevention.

Permit Assistance

- Single point of contact for agency rules and information
- Permit Assistance Teams
- Creation of timelines for permittee and agency

Compliance Assistance

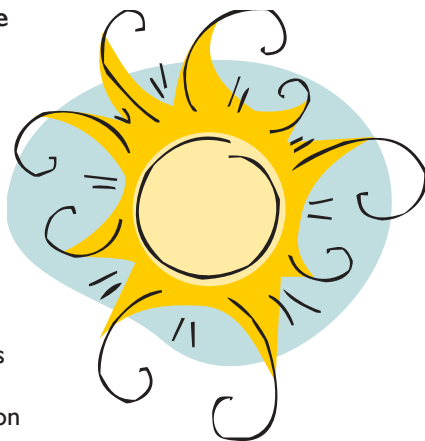
- Industry Specific workshops
- Targeted Outreach
- Workshop on applicable rules
- Six month corrective action period

Small Business Assistance

- Finance workshops
- Updates on upcoming regulatory changes

Pollution Prevention

- Process specific seminars
- Process audits to identify pollution prevention opportunities
- Clearinghouse of pollution prevention information



Local Government Customers: The local government and rural assistance offices of the Customer Services Division work with governments to develop wellhead protection plans.

- Evaluation of activities in wellhead delineation areas
- Identification of potential sources of contamination
- Development of management plans
- Development of contingency plans

Citizen Customers A wide variety of assistance to customers is achieved through communication of environmental risks.

- Formation of citizens steering committees at Superfund sites
- Creation of citizens/industry workgroups to mediate complaints
- Consultation with citizens on household waste issues
- Facilitation of public participation in the permit process
- Specialized workgroups to provide resolution without confrontation when environmental issues are in contention

Internal Customers: In addition to assisting external customers, the Customer Services Division is the focal point within the agency for many regulatory reform initiatives. The hallmark of the reform efforts is simplification.

- Cross media weekly permit status reports
- Standardized permit checklists
- Development of uniform permitting process
- Development of standardized process for public input
- Coordination of multi-divisional projects
- Salvaging abandoned industrial site for future development

More on other side

The Oklahoma DEQ was the first state environmental agency to establish a customer assistance program. In the short time since its inception, the Customer Services Division has become a national model for customer focus in the environmental arena. Its success has led eight states to contact DEQ to learn what was done and why the Customer Assistance Program has been so successful. Many of these states are now emulating Oklahoma's efforts. In fact, the Environmental Council of States (ECOS), has referred to DEQ as the "Godfather of Customer Assistance." In addition, a targeted outreach to foundries and metal casters is receiving regional attention. DEQ has been asked by EPA to provide training which will help other states in Region 6 develop a similar outreach to foundries. The Customer Assistance Program, located in the Customer Services Division of DEQ, represents a cultural change in the attitude of government. This is evidenced in the use of surveys to determine the effectiveness of the customer assistance program and how processes may be improved in the future. The program serves as a focal point for out-sourcing when

contracts can provide more efficient service to customers. It has been a national model for innovative programs including two pilot programs for delegating Superfund responsibilities to states. In both Bartlesville and Blackwell, sites are being cleaned up without the stigma of Superfund listing on the National Priorities List. These pilot projects have ensured environmental clean up and restoration in the area while minimizing community disruption and at the same time producing savings to industries involved of more than 50 million dollars. Customer Assistance, which began as an effort to enhance economic development, has grown to encompass and be successful in such areas as; targeted compliance outreach, uniform agency processes, special citizen outreach, mediation between industry and community groups, negotiation of issues between DEQ and other state agencies, rules unification and simplification and many more. DEQ's focus on serving the customer is stimulating a revolutionary change in which government acts efficiently, in partnership with non-governmental entities, to protect and conserve the environment.

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