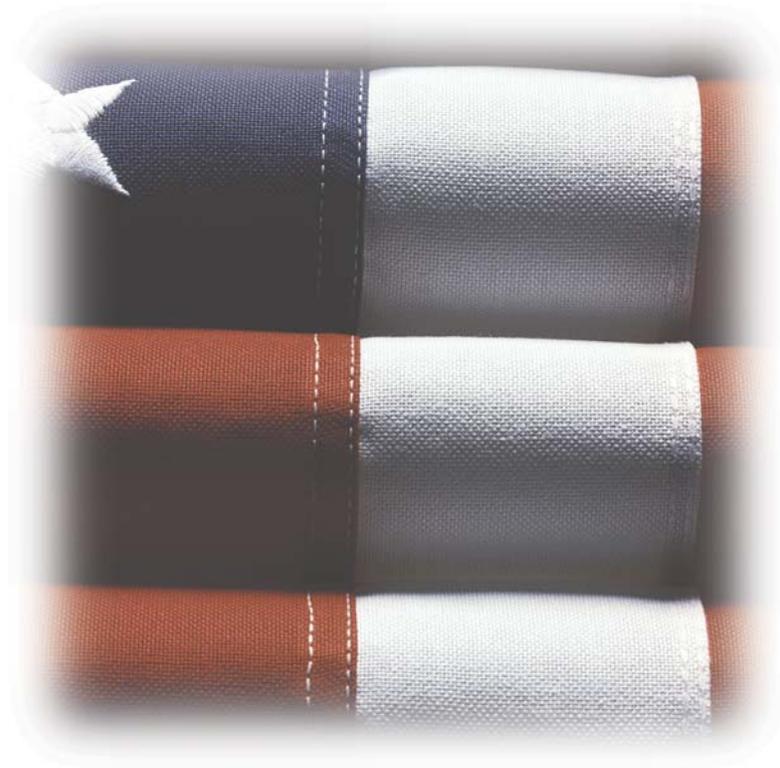


LOCAL SERVICES



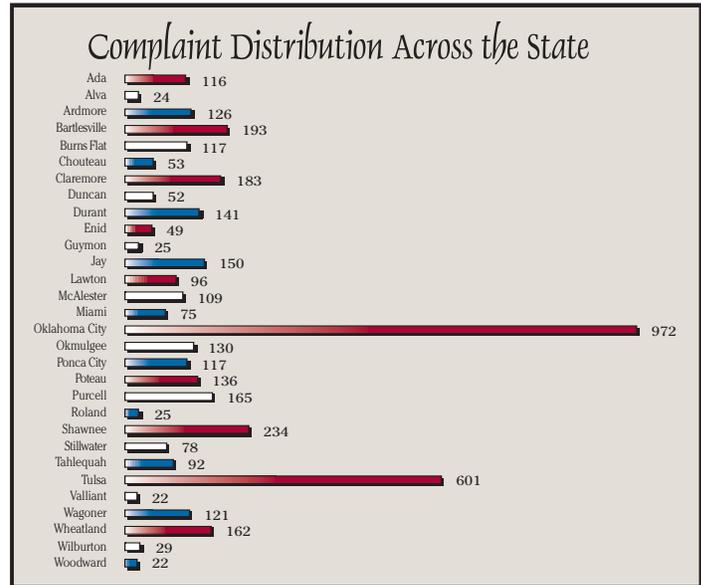
LOCAL SERVICES HANDLES COMPLAINTS AND MORE

INTRODUCTION

Like all of the other DEQ divisions, Environmental Complaints and Local Services is headquartered in the Oklahoma City office, which houses the Administration and Complaints Offices. Unlike the other divisions, ECLS also operates from 29 field offices across the state. The 70 local environmental specialists who work at these offices are exceedingly knowledgeable in all programs administered by DEQ.

With this broad based environmental expertise, the local ECLS environmental specialists bring the programs of DEQ to the citizens and communities of the state. The local environmental specialists monitor compliance at all facilities permitted by DEQ through periodic unannounced inspections, administer the on-site sewage program and provide technical assistance to communities and citizens on a wide variety of environmental issues. Most important, the local environmental specialists provide prompt response to all complaints of environmental pollution at any location in the state.

DEQ has earned a national reputation for its Complaints Program that features 24-hour complaint hotline intake, a two-day response by a local environmental specialist, written updates to complainants, meaningful resolution and consistent enforcement when necessary. The cornerstones of this successful pro-



Although the greatest concentration of complaints is in the metro areas, all 30 DEQ offices actively investigate and resolve complaints.

gram are a courteous complaints staff manning the phones and maintaining records of all complaint activity, a persistent and unrelenting enforcement attorney and 70 local environmental specialists ready to investigate any complaint. This system of locally based environmental specialists clearly performs to the Agency's advantage as they are well versed in most aspects of environmental regulation, are empowered to initiate enforcement action when warranted and can recognize and refer situations requiring additional expertise. ★

TORNADO RESPONSE A BREEZE FOR LOCAL SERVICES

Each spring, Oklahomans prepare for and usually are besieged by severe weather that often includes tornados and damaging straight-line winds. Typically, when these events hit a community, a number of needed response activities occur, beginning with rescue and recovery immediately after the storm. Once this phase is complete, DEQ begins work assessing infrastructure damage and coordinating cleanup and disposal operations.

In the case of the May 8, 2003, tornado, local ECLS environmental specialists were on the job by the morning after the storm, contacting officials in affected communities to determine the status of essential water and wastewater services. The storms had damaged or destroyed electricity supply systems in many communities, causing interruptions to water and wastewater treatment and delivery systems. As needs were identified, the local ECLS environmental specialists related detailed information to other DEQ Divisions, which also provided technical assistance

and support to the affected communities.

Once basic water supply and wastewater disposal services were restored, the storm recovery became an issue of debris cleanup and disposal. Two main problems were the sheer volume of tornado damage debris and the presence of widely scattered household hazardous waste. The local ECLS environmental specialists were instrumental in solving both of these problems. They worked with the EPA to establish four collection points for household hazardous waste, including such items as cleaning supplies, pesticides and paint products. They also worked with community officials to establish disposal sites for burning and/or burying the debris in an environmentally sound manner.

Through its use of local ECLS environmental specialists, DEQ was able to respond quickly and efficiently to help Oklahoma's communities restore fundamental services to their citizens and to help citizens find environmentally safe solutions for debris removal. ★



Damage left by the May 8, 2003 tornado.



DEQ and EPA establish sites to collect household hazardous waste collected in tornado debris.

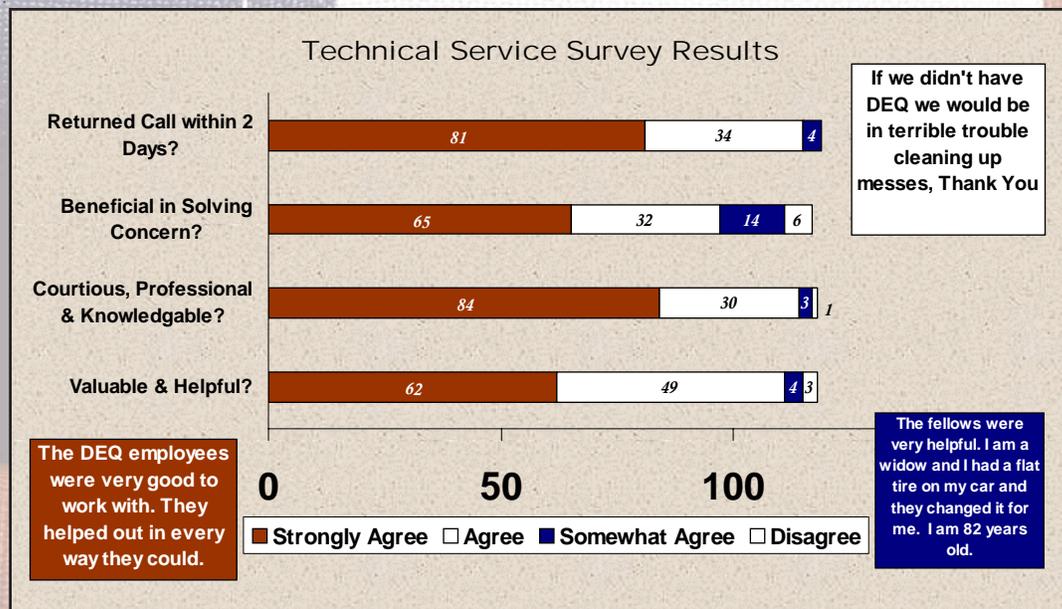


The City of Moore, under the guidance of DEQ, set up an air curtain destructor to safely burn brush and limbs from the May 8, 2003 tornado.

LOCAL SERVICES LENDS A HAND

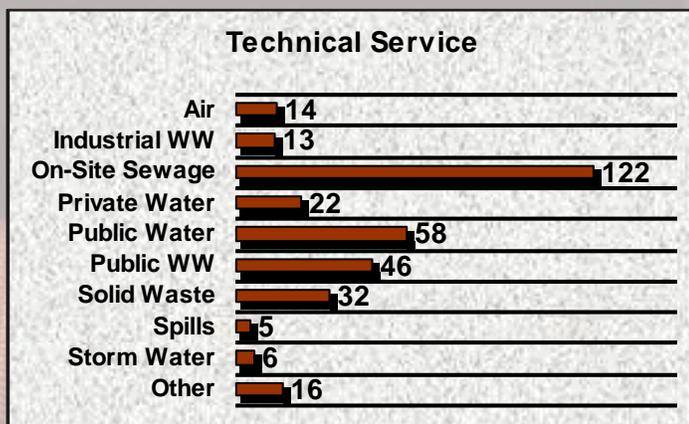
The local Environmental Complaints and Local Services (ECLS) environmental specialists have always spent a great deal of their time providing technical assistance to citizens, facility operators and communities. Services provided include compliance advice for facilities, environmental improvement suggestions for communities concerning issues such as waste collection and recycling and on-site sewage disposal and water well recommendations for citizens. DEQ has long recognized that time spent in technical assistance prevents future pollution, permit violations and the need for enforcement.

Prior to this fiscal year, DEQ had not tracked the number



It is clear from surveys that the expert assistance provided by the local Environmental Specialists is very much appreciated.

and types of technical assistance activities the local ECLS



The ECLS local environmental specialists provide assistance in all aspects of DEQ's jurisdiction.

environmental specialists performed, nor had it surveyed those receiving assistance to determine the quality and effectiveness of our efforts. Defining technical assistance as any assistance not associated with inspection, complaint investigation or enforcement activities allowed ECLS to begin recording and tracking these services. Now, each time a qualifying service is provided, we record the duration and nature of the service and send the recipient of the service a customer satisfaction survey.

Over 300 qualifying technical assistance services have been performed since July 1, 2002 and many local ECLS environmental specialists find this type of work most rewarding. They welcome the chance to help people achieve environmental compliance through advice and assistance, rather than focusing strictly on enforcement. The extensive diversity of assistance requests shows that there is a great need for this service and survey results show that our assistance, advice and expertise are greatly appreciated. ★

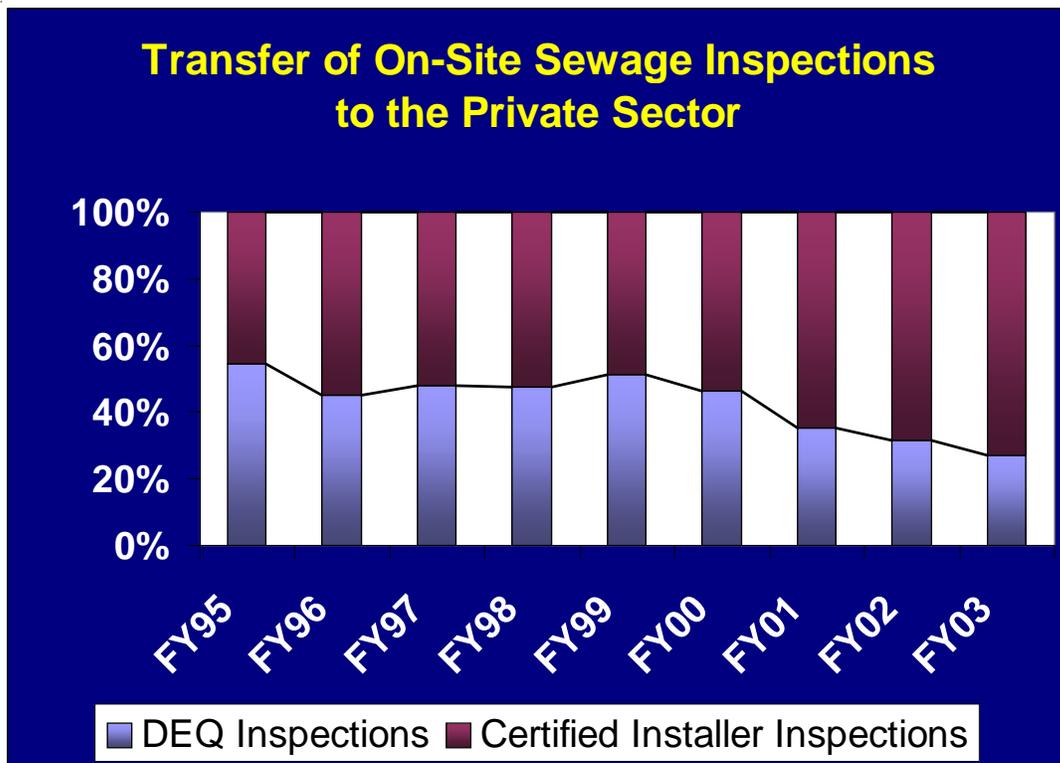
INSTALLER CERTIFICATION

MOVES INSPECTIONS TO PRIVATE SECTOR

For the past eight years, DEQ has administered a voluntary certification program for on-site sewage disposal system installers. Beginning July 1, 2002, certification has now become mandatory for anyone installing more than ten (10) systems a year. Both the certified installers and DEQ benefit by the certification.

Certification allows installers to perform inspections and complete disposal systems they install without an inspection by DEQ, thus enabling certified installers to save time and money. Certified installers also benefit by greater customer confidence in their knowledge and abilities.

DEQ benefits by enabling the local environmental specialists to focus on facility inspections and compliance, storm water permit compliance, environmental complaints and local services to communities and individuals. By training and monitoring the certified installers, DEQ ensures that the certi-



DEQ has continually reduced its on-site sewage inspection role by certifying installers to complete the inspections.

fied installers maintain the high level of knowledge and ability required for proper installation and maintenance of various types of on-site sewage disposal systems.

Over 6,400 installations have been performed statewide this fiscal year, with 75%

of these performed by certified installers. Currently, there are 282 certified installers in Oklahoma, reflecting a 14% increase over installers certified the previous year.

DEQ continues the transfer of the inspection portion of the on-site sewage disposal

system program to the private sector and at the same time, continues to increase DEQ's responsiveness to local requests for services, environmental complaints investigations and facility inspections and compliance. ★

DEQ MOVES FORWARD WITH SOIL PROFILES



DEQ soil scientist, Acacia Croy, instructs a student in soil profiling techniques.

This past fiscal year, DEQ implemented a certification requirement for those using soil profile descriptions to design on-site sewage disposal systems. Soil profile descriptions are an alternative to the standard percolation test for determining the type and size of on-site sewage disposal systems. The soil profile description involves hand texturing of the soil to determine clay, sand and silt content, eliminating the inherent uncertainty encountered with percolation tests due to weather conditions, incomplete presoaking and seasonally high or low groundwater.

The certification process involves twenty-four hours of classroom training, a written examination and a practical examination where the certification candidate must correctly identify unknown soil groups. Sixty-four ECLS environmental specialists have completed the certification requirements and are now using soil profile descriptions instead of percolation tests to determine the best on-site sewage disposal system suited to each specific location. Additionally, six private sector system designers are now



The red and gray mottled soil shows where groundwater rises during wet seasons.

certified with another fifteen in the process of earning their certification.

The transition to soil profile descriptions has already paid off for DEQ. In several cases, the soil profile method has identified seasonal high groundwater through gray mottling of the soil. A percolation test would not have identified

this problem, which typically causes subsurface systems to fail during the wet seasons. This increased accuracy, in conjunction with the timesavings realized by not needing the four-hour presoak required by the soil percolation method, supports the soil profile as an improved alternative to the percolation test. ★

COMPLAINT VARIETY CHALLENGES LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALISTS

The Complaints Office of DEQ continues to receive approximately 6,000 citizen complaints each year. Com-

plaints vary from fairly minor open burning issues to reports of large-scale dumping of solid waste or major dis-

charges of untreated sewage. All complaints, regardless of magnitude, are investigated by local ECLS environmental

specialists and are worked and tracked through resolution by the Complaints Office.

One of the larger complaints worked this past fiscal year started with a simple report of open dumping of solid waste near Miami, Oklahoma. Upon investigation, we discovered that a private industry had dumped thousands of cubic yards of solid waste into water filled rock quarries. DEQ acted swiftly, citing the owner of the business for open dumping and pollution of the waters of the state. DEQ then worked with the business owner to develop a

clean-up plan and within 3 months of discovery, the site was free of debris.

Since the inception of DEQ, it has been our practice to develop new policies, practices and procedures for dealing with environmental concerns as new issues are identified.

A recently developed practice includes the training of the local ECLS environmental specialists to identify fugitive dust violations. Prior to this year, fugitive dust complaints were referred to the Air Quality Division. However, Air Quality inspectors were finding it difficult to reach facilities while violations were occurring. Due to strategic office locations, local ECLS environmental specialists are readily available and able to respond to citizen complaints within minutes. This increases the Agency's chances of getting to a facility while the violation is occurring and being able to help the facility correct these types of problems.

DEQ, primarily through its local ECLS environmental specialists and Complaints Office, continues to provide the rapid response and consistent enforcement that result in swift correction of environmental pollution problems for Oklahoma. ★



Solid waste dumped in a rock quarry near Miami, Oklahoma. INSET: Jeff Brents investigates complaints at a concrete batch plant.