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Small Business The Advocate

For and about small businesses affected by environmental regulations

Healthy Environment. Strong Business. Good Sense.

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FY 97 Annual Summary

Texas EnviroMentors: Free Advice, Big Savings

A new volunteer consultant program called Texas EnviroMentor is matching up environmental and legal professionals with businesses that need help understanding or complying with regulations. Statewide, 47 EnviroMentors volunteer up to 50 hours a year each in free consulting

services and time. During the first 10 months of the program, 16 matches saved small businesses more than \$14,000 in consulting fees. But these savings pale in comparison to more valuable yet unquantifiable benefits of the program: compliance with regulations that can carry significant penalties.

One such success story involves the new owner of a marble fixtures manufacturing operation. After purchasing the company, the owner realized that waste regulations had been flouted. Although initially hesitant about working with a state agency, the owner contacted SBAP for assistance. Shortly thereafter, an EnviroMentor helped the owner determine his generator status and plan out procedures for complying with waste rules. The facility is now operating safely and without threat of

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penalties. The pleased owner complimented SBAP staffers. "I appreciate your help," he said. "This is my first time dealing with any state agency. I have found the TNRCC to be very helpful and not someone to fear, as I had been led to believe." ■

SBAP Network Pays off Big for San Antonio Facility

A small plating company in San Antonio was assessed a \$5,716 hazardous waste generator fee, primarily because of its wastewater discharge. The facility's health and safety coordinator believed the wastewater was fee-exempt and the assessment erroneous, but, the TNRCC denied a request for a fee waiver.

Fortunately, the coordinator was a member of the San Antonio Manufacturers Association, which functions as the city's small business advisory committee, and knew about the services SBAP offers. One phone call was all it took to resolve the problem: an SBAP staffer quickly discovered that the wrong code had been used to identify the wastewater discharge. With this clerical error corrected, the fee waiver was granted and the assessment lowered to the correct amount of \$100. Just one more example of why it pays to link up with SBAP advisory committees. ■

Standard Exemptions Broadened with Small Business Input

Business owners and industry organizations teamed up with the SBAP in FY 97 to review several standard exemptions with an eye to reducing economic impact while maintaining environmental protection. This teamwork produced several significant revisions to standard exemptions involving:

- ▼ **Wood manufacturers** — Standard Exemption 106.231, which covers emissions and particulates produced during woodworking, saved the industry more than \$50 million in air pollution equipment and more than \$750,000 per month in document processing and preparation. Covered businesses should average savings of \$1,500 per month in record-keeping and reporting costs.
- ▼ **Screen printers** — Standard Exemption 106.418 for emissions from printing processes now applies to 1,200 screen printers, who previously had to secure a permit at costs starting at \$15,000. Estimated savings to the industry total \$18 million.
- ▼ **Automotive shops** — Standard Exemption 106.102 allows automotive shops to burn used oil as fuel if their heaters have a capacity of 1 million BTUs per hour or less. Now more than 8,000 small auto repair businesses can use the oil as heating fuel, saving an average of 50 cents per gallon in used oil processing costs as well as the cost of fuel. ■



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Target: Information Needs

SBAP workshops, seminars, guidebooks, on-site visits, meetings, and conferences reached 4,700 Texas businesses in fiscal 1997. Targeted industries included wood products manufacturers, foundries, dry cleaners, automotive repair facilities, printers, metal finishers, and dairies.

More than 600 small businesses representing a variety of industries attended new workshops held across the state to spread the word on recordkeeping requirements for waste. Along the Texas-Mexico border, the SBAP sponsored five workshops for hazardous waste transporters, freight forwarders, and



custom brokers on transborder shipping requirements. Seven state and federal agencies partnered with the TNRCC on the workshops. The joint efforts also produced instructional videos in Spanish on requirements for the auto repair industry, hazardous waste management, and solid waste record keeping.

The SBAP also worked with U.S. EPA and the states of Oklahoma and New Mexico to develop *Environmental Management Tools for Small Business*, an accounting system designed to help companies calculate the environmental costs of doing business and

the savings they can realize by implementing waste reduction practices. The EMT guidebook is available in both English and Spanish versions. ■

The Small Business Advocate is published bimonthly by the Small Business Assistance Program. Comments or suggestions for future articles should be sent to:

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Fax: 512-239-1065

Push-Button Help at Your Fingertips

Word is spreading rapidly about SBAP services: calls to the SBAP hot line increased almost 20 percent from FY 1996 to 1997. The program received 3,918 phone calls from small businesses and other agencies with questions on environmental regulations, with the vast majority — 72 percent — involving compliance issues. Some 93 percent of respondents to customer satisfaction surveys rated the service as good or excellent.

Compliance assistance also is available through the SBAP Web site, which offers a wide variety of publications, fact sheets, and other materials explaining environmental regulations and requirements. Access the Web site at www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec.small_business/. ■



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UPCOMING EVENTS:

NOVEMBER

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| Metal Finishing Workshop (San Antonio) | November 6 |
| Dallas Small Business Advisory Committee | November 18 |

DECEMBER

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| Houston/Galveston Small Business Advisory Committee | December 4 |
| Golden Triangle Small Business Advisory Committee | December 18 |

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