



2004 Annual Report

Wisconsin's Small Business Environmental Council

Who Are We?

- Small Business Environmental Council
- Began meeting in 1994
- One of three components of the Small Business Clean Air Assistance Program administered by Department of Commerce
- Authorized under s. 507 of the Clean Air Act Amendments and implemented under s. 560.11, Wisconsin Statutes
- Nine members appointed for three year terms by either the majority and minority leaders of State Assembly and Senate, the Governor, and the Secretary of Commerce and DNR
- Members represent small business owners and the public

How Are We Funded?

- Program receives no federal funding
- Supported by state air permit fees for expenses

What Are Our Responsibilities?

- Meet regularly to discuss environmental issues affecting small businesses in Wisconsin
- Review and comment on the effectiveness of information and assistance provided to small business by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
- Comment on whether information is understandable to laypersons
- Review new regulations to see if they meet the Regulatory Paperwork Reduction Act criteria
- Convey difficulties encountered by small businesses trying to comply with regulations

2004 Highlights

Regulatory Input

2004 Wisconsin Act 276, more commonly referred to as Green Tier, was signed into law in April. The Green Tier program gives companies the flexibility they need to improve environmental performance while they boost productivity, cut costs and grow their business. Green Tier encourages businesses to not only meet their environmental obligations, but to go beyond baseline compliance. The council was instrumental in securing passage of the legislation, recommended a direct role for a member of the Council on the statutorily established Green Tier Advisors, provided numerous outreach opportunities to small businesses and directly contributed to program implementation.

Revisions to Wisconsin's Hazardous Air Pollutant Rule (NR 445) became effective on July 1, 2004. The council worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the development of the rule. The council's input was instrumental in providing a voice for small businesses. The council advised the WDNR to include provisions that would help small businesses comply with the rule. As a result of the council's input, the revised rule now includes some new concepts (e.g., incidental emitter) that will reduce the burden on small businesses in determining if the rule applies and will make it easier for them to comply.

Business Concerns

At the end of 2003, WDNR Secretary Hassett announced the Air Permit Improvement Initiative (APII). APII requires the WDNR to streamline its air permitting program while maintaining environmental standards. Throughout 2004, the council provided feedback by participating in workgroups and through regular council meetings. With direct input from the council and others the WDNR has pursued innovative approaches to permitting. The WDNR has begun the process of employing innovative programs such as an Environmental Results Program (ERP), Registration and General Permits. An ERP allows participating businesses an opportunity to self certify compliance. The WDNR began the process of implementing a Registration Permit program that will greatly reduce the time it takes to process and receive permits. Also, the WDNR is expanding the number of General Permits available to businesses. General Permits are industry specific (e.g., rock crushers) permits that can be obtained quickly by eligible sources.

The council supports changes to the air program that will provide greater efficiencies with fewer expenses. A work in progress, the council continues to work with the WDNR on streamlining its air permit program.

Smaller businesses never before regulated by state or federal agencies were impacted by the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. Steps have been taken to address the concerns of small businesses as regulations are created, promulgated and enforced.

The Wisconsin Small Business Environmental Council, a component of the state's Small Business Clean Air Assistance Program, provides a chance for small business owners to speak out. Appointed by the Governor, State Assembly and Senate, council members comment on the fairness and effectiveness of WDNR and EPA regulations pertaining to small businesses.

The Small Business Environmental Council provides a forum for rule makers to gain information on the impact rules have on smaller businesses. Many groups have come to value the opinions of the Council.

EVERY PROGRAM A PARTNERSHIP

Our Membership:

Council members want to assist other small businesses by acting as mentors. Based on their different experiences in dealing with environmental regulations, they can offer advice or refer a business to resources to help them find their way.

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Each Small Business Assistance Program is comprised of three parts:

- A technical assistance component to provide the detailed help that small businesses need.
- An ombudsman to advocate on behalf of small businesses within the regulatory environment.
- A Compliance Assistance Panel made up of small business owners and representatives to consult and advise on program content.

Other WI programs with which we build working partnerships include:

- Trade Associations
- UW Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education
- Small Business Development Centers
- Other state and local agencies

Members reach out to other business organizations to share information about environmental programs and services.

The council has at its disposal new tools to reach a wider audience that needs to hear about the types of regulatory assistance available to small businesses in Wisconsin. Council members can disseminate an Environmental Information Packet upon request, which includes fact sheets and contact information that is very useful to new businesses unsure of their regulatory obligations.

Find out what is going on with the WI Small Business Environmental Council by visiting www.wienvirohelp.com, contacting CleanAir@commerce.state.wi.us or calling 1-800-HELP BUSINESS (1-800-435-7287).