

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY:



MCDOWELL ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Jurisdiction:

McDowell County

Best Management Practice:

McDowell Environmental (Information) Exchange Program

Purpose:

To provide an opportunity for key representatives, involved in solid waste management from local industries, to meet and discuss and share information on the important issues related to industrial solid waste management and waste reduction.

Ordinance:

None

Contact:

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DESCRIPTION

McDowell County's Keep McDowell Beautiful program (a Keep America Beautiful affiliate) organized a task force on commercial and industrial waste that has been in place for the past eight years. This long-standing information exchange program serves to bring together key players in solid waste management from a variety of local industries on a quarterly basis to address many of the issues involving solid waste management. Information discussed and shared at the meetings includes topics such as the proper handling of solid waste and different waste reduction activities. In addition, at least one county solid waste or public works representative attends every meeting to provide an update and field questions on the status of solid waste management in McDowell County.

Since most task force members also handle health and safety matters for their company, the group's focus has been expanded to include these issues. The quarterly meeting locations are at different industry representative's facilities. Meetings include breakfast and last approximately two hours. Following the meetings there is often an opportunity to tour the host facility.

PURPOSE

The solid waste task force serves as an opportunity for key representatives involved in solid waste management from local industries to meet, discuss and share information on the important issues related to industrial solid waste management and waste reduction. The meetings provide a

confidential setting for open information exchange. In addition, the presence of a county representative is a beneficial way to provide information on changes in procedures and laws, as well as to answer questions related to the county's solid waste management program, compliance, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Keep McDowell Beautiful (KMB) organization created the idea of the information exchange group and became the contact agency to set meeting dates as well as create and mail agendas. In addition, the KMB organization coordinated with other people and agencies about the program, such as the McDowell county manager, the McDowell public works director (responsible for the transfer station and recycling program), the McDowell Chamber of Commerce, the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance, and local and state speakers. To gain participation from industry representatives, the KMB coordinator obtained a list of local industries from the chamber of commerce. She then informed each industry about the group and obtained contact information for the solid waste management representative from each industry.

An advisory committee, consisting of the KMB coordinator and four or five group members, meet prior to the meetings to ensure that a meeting place is reserved and a speaker scheduled for each quarterly meeting. An opportunity exists at each meeting for members to suggest future speakers and/or meeting topics. On occasion, guest speakers such as



regulatory staff will be invited to field questions on certain issues. However, when a regulatory person attends the meetings, depending on the preference of the industry representatives, the group may meet at a local restaurant instead of a facility. The host company typically provides breakfast for the meetings. A \$10 charge at each meeting helps to cover the cost of meals (when they are not provided by the host industry) and covers the costs of postage and printing the agendas. At the meetings, individual organizations within the group are occasionally recognized for specific accomplishments. All information from the meetings is held confidential.

RESULTS

It took approximately one year for the program to gain regular and active participation and develop into a successful information exchange group. There are several reasons why

McDowell County's Environmental Information Exchange program has been a long-term success. The Keep McDowell Beautiful coordinator attributes as a major factor in the program's success that the media is not present at these meetings. Not having the media present avoids creating an environment that hinders open information exchange. In addition, having one coordinating agency creating the agenda and ensuring it is adhered to at the meetings is an important component to the program's success.

The number of participants ranges from eight to 25 industry representatives at any given meeting. Representatives who actively participate in the group and regularly attend meetings account for at least half of the industries in McDowell County. Although there have been many success stories shared within the group, given that all meetings are kept confidential, no information is available regarding individual facility successes and achievements.



The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and education on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Call DPPEA at (919) 715.6500 or (800) 763-0136 or e-mail nowaste@p2pays.org, or visit DPPEA's Web site at www.p2pays.org for assistance with issues in this case study or any of your waste reduction concerns.