



Site Navigation

- Cleanups, Remediation
- Emergency Response
- Licensing
- Permits, Registrations
- Preventing Pollution
- Recycling
- Reporting
- Rules

- Data
- Forms
- Maps
- Public Notices
- Publications
- Records
- Webcasts

- About Us
- Contact Us

How 's our Customer Service? Please fill out our [Customer Satisfaction Survey](#)

You are here: [Home](#) → [Publications](#) → [Periodicals](#) → [Natural Outlook](#) → [Spring 2004](#) → Site Visits Help with Compliance

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Site Visits Help with Compliance

Recognition grows for a TCEQ program that aids small businesses and local governments with environmental regulations.

Voluntary program gains partners at the federal, local levels

The Environmental Protection Agency and several local environmental enforcement programs have agreed to recognize a TCEQ program that awards one-year exemptions from routine inspections to qualified small businesses and local governments.

The Site Visit Program offers free, on-site assessments of environmental compliance--a proactive approach to improving compliance and preventing or reducing the need for enforcement.

The agency contracts with environmental consultants to visit facilities seeking a voluntary audit for environmental compliance. After the site visit, the facility operator receives a confidential report detailing any deficiencies found, as well as specific recommendations for achieving full compliance.

A follow-up visit three to six months later determines whether all the deficiencies have been addressed or any new ones have surfaced. Once compliance is verified, the facility can join the Compliance Commitment (C2) Partnership and earn a one-year exemption from routine TCEQ inspections. The exemption, however, is void in the event of an imminent threat to human health or the environment, a catastrophe, the filing of a formal complaint, or if a follow-up inspection of previously cited violations is required.

Being a C2 Partner also means one-year exemptions from routine inspections by the following entities (again, exceptions are made for emergency or nonroutine circumstances):

- Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6 in Dallas
- City of Dallas Air Pollution Control
- City of Dallas Public Works and Transportation--Storm Water Management
- City of Fort Worth Department of Environmental Management
- City of Houston Bureau of Air Quality Control
- City of Houston Public Works and Engineering
- Harris County Pollution Control
- Galveston County Health District

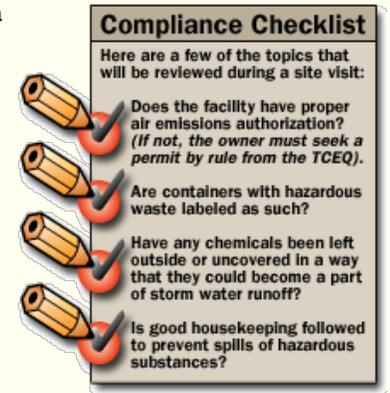
The C2 Partnership, with more than 80 participants, not only offers the possibility of reducing the regulatory burden while preventing waste and pollution, it also could mean a higher compliance history rating--one of the factors considered when the TCEQ issues permits.

Last year, the TCEQ's compliance specialists arranged for 257 site visits of regulated entities. These specialists, located at agency headquarters and in 16 regional offices, also responded to an estimated 6,700 queries, and conducted 330 workshops and presentations on environmental issues.

More information about site visits is available at www.sblga.info.

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[Back to the top](#)



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