

The Advocate



For and about small businesses and local governments affected by environmental regulations

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Texas Clean School Bus Program Creates Breath of Fresh Air

On Nov. 10, the TCEQ launched the Texas Clean School Bus Grant Program, which helps school districts and charter schools purchase and install emissions-reduction technologies. The TCEQ will accept applications for the first round of funding through Feb. 29, 2008.

The grant program is part of the overall Texas Clean School Bus program, established by House Bill 3469 in the 79th Texas Legislature. The program received \$7.5 million for fiscal 2008 and fiscal 2009 and is designed

to improve the health of children by reducing emissions of diesel exhaust from school buses. An additional \$4.3 million will become available from the Texas Emission Reduction Plan for these clean school bus projects. Funding is open to school bus retrofit projects in ALL

public school districts and charter schools in Texas that operate at least one diesel-fueled school bus.

TCEQ Clean School Bus grants help school districts and

charter schools when purchasing and installing emissions-reduction technologies. Newer technology gives several options for cleaner-running school buses, including:

- a closed crankcase filtration system
- a diesel particulate filter
- a diesel oxidation catalyst
- a partial flow-through filter

Costs range from \$800 to \$7,500 per device. School bus emissions decrease by as much as 90 percent when these engine or exhaust retrofits are made.

If you would like more information or to access the grant forms, please visit www.texascleanschoolbus.org. ■



Texas Clean School Bus Program

Proper Collection of Environmental Fees

Many types of small businesses must pay environmental fees to cover the cost of implementing required state programs to meet rules and regulations. If you choose to pass the cost of environmental-service fees to your customers, please be aware of the following guidelines.

Texas Tax Code Section 111.016 requires that any monies represented and collected as a “tax” or “fee” must be paid to the state in full. If you designate an amount on a bill as a fee, you will be required to remit it to the state. Therefore, any amount you collect from your customers must not be styled as a state “tax” or “fee.” Any amount collected from

a customer and specifically identified as being related to an environmental program should be labeled as a reimbursement.

Any additional charge billed to a customer for reimbursement of fees that the EPA or TCEQ require is considered part of the total price of the service and is subject to sales tax, even if separately stated. (See Tax Code, Sec. 151.007.)

For example, the Texas Legislature established the Dry Cleaner Remediation Program, which established dry cleaning facility registration requirements, fees, performance standards, distributor registration, and a method for revenue disbursement.

Some dry cleaners have chosen to pass along the costs of this program to their customers in the form of higher rates for services. Sales tax is due on the total amount charged. Others have decided to separately state a line item charge for “Environmental Fees,” or similar language on the invoice or receipt given to their customers. If the invoice states “environmental fees,” the fees must be remitted to the state.

If you have any questions regarding Texas sales, use tax, and environmental fees, please call the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts toll free at 800-252-5555 or e-mail the Comptroller’s office at tax.help@cpa.state.tx.us. ■

EnviroMentors - Complimentary Professional Assistance

The EnviroMentor Program, like all assistance from TCEQ's Small Business and Local Government Assistance section, is free and confidential. EnviroMentors include consultants, engineers, utility operators, and other professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to help you comply with environmental rules.

You can receive assistance if you are a small business (fewer than 100 employees); a county with a population of fewer than 100,000; or a city with a population of fewer than 50,000. There are other qualifying criteria: financial need, good faith effort to comply, and other factors.

EnviroMentors assist in environmental areas—specifically air, water, and waste. Services include:

- help completing air authorization forms or Permit By Rule applications,
- guidance for developing Storm Water Pollution Prevention (SWP3) Plans,
- advice for resolving water quality issues at wastewater treatment plants,

- tips on designing paint booths that meet required specifications,
- help in developing Spill Prevention Control & Countermeasure (SPCC) Plans,
- and much more!

In return for volunteering 20 hours per year, EnviroMentors receive:

- consideration for free admission to one TCEQ training or event per year—including Trade Fair;
- personal and company name on a TCEQ Web page, increasing public visibility;
- updates on TCEQ rule changes via Rules Review Committee; and
- satisfaction of providing valuable community service to help the environment.

EnviroMentor matches are made by request to any Small Business and Local Government Assistance staff member. If you think you could benefit from an EnviroMentor, or you would like to volunteer, go to the EnviroMentor Web site at www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/sblga/envimntr.html or call 800-447-2827. ■

Environmental Help is Only a Phone Call Away

Did you know that the Small Business and Local Government Assistance section provides compliance help to approximately 600 callers every month on its toll-free hotline?

Customers who call the hotline receive a timely response to a wide range of environmental concerns. Topics include waste disposal, recycling, dry cleaning, construction, wastewater treatment, metal finishing, printing, surface coating, auto body and auto repair facilities, and numerous other topics.

The Small Business and Local Government Assistance hotline (800-447-2827) is staffed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding the noon hour. During non-working hours and holidays, callers can leave a message and a member of the team will return calls the next business day.

The TCEQ strives to offer small businesses and local governments excellent customer service and top-notch environmental assistance. Please give us the opportunity to work with you by giving us a call today. ■

Join Us for the Environmental Trade Fair and Conference!

Make plans now to attend the TCEQ's 2008 Environmental Trade Fair and Conference from April 29 to May 1, at the Austin Convention Center. This annual event is Texas' premier environmental educational forum, considered by many to be one of the best in the country.

You can view the latest products and services of exhibitors, earn continuing education credits, and learn about sustainable practices for communities and businesses. You can also attend educational sessions on topics such as:

- permitting
- remediation
- waste management
- current air issues
- water quality and drinking water management
- pollution prevention
- compliance assistance and enforcement
- laboratory practices and data reporting
- border infrastructure funding and assistance

For more information, visit
www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/events/etfc/etf.html

Properly Dispose of Used Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

When looking for ways to reduce energy consumption, many businesses and households replace traditional incandescent lightbulbs with compact fluorescent lightbulbs. On average, a compact fluorescent lightbulb uses about 75 percent less energy than a traditional incandescent bulb.

Since compact fluorescent lightbulbs do contain a small amount of mercury, the bulbs should be disposed of properly. However, the amount of mercury in these fluorescent lightbulbs is very small, and it is important to note that no mercury is released when compact fluorescent lightbulbs are intact or in use. Recycling is the best disposal option



for compact fluorescents. For more information about recycling or properly disposing of your used compact fluorescent lightbulbs, visit www.cleanup.org.

If recycling or household hazardous waste collection is not available in your area, discarding compact fluorescent lightbulbs in the regular municipal trash is a legal option for households. Preferred disposal calls for sealing compact fluorescent bulbs in plastic bags before placing in the trash. For more information on compact fluorescent bulbs, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Web site at www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls_pr_cfls. ■

EPA Offers CARE Grants

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that approximately \$3 million will be available in 2008 to support community-based partnerships that work to reduce pollution at the local level. These grants are awarded by EPA's Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program. Applications for the CARE grants are due March 17, 2008. Eligible applicants include county and local governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations, and universities. Prospective applicants can ask questions about the application process during

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UPCOMING EVENTS

SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, AND CONFERENCES

Small Business Advisory Committee (SBAC) Meetings

Dallas SBAC, April 16 • Lori Rose, 817-588-5836
Fort Worth SBAC, April 16 • Tasha Burns, 817-588-5868
Golden Triangle SBAC, May 6 • Lori Palmer, 409-899-8789
Houston SBAC, March 19 • Clarence Gray, 713-767-3582

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program Seminar

San Marcos Activity Center • Thursday, Feb. 21, San Marcos
For more information, contact Diane Stallings at dstallin@tceq.state.tx.us or at 512-239-6333

For more information, or to receive notices of workshops, send an e-mail to ppc@tceq.state.tx.us or call 512-239-3100.

Guidance, Please!

Do you need help understanding environmental rules and regulations? You can get started by reading TCEQ publications that are easy to understand, in straightforward language, such as the following:

Let's Tackle the Grease in This Kitchen (GI-290)

Due Dates and Monitoring Tip Sheet for TPDES Domestic Wastewater Permittees (RG-448)

Complying with Rules on Surface Preparation (RG-413)

Waste from Grease Traps, Grit Traps, and Septic Tanks: Questions and Answers (RG-389)

Answers for Small Auto Body Shops, Obtaining Air Authorization Under Permit by Rule 106.436 (GI-151)

A Guide to Developing an Environmental Management System for a Small Business (GI-304)

A Model Environmental Management System for a Small Business: Metal Finisher (GI-304A)

Environmental Rules for Car Washes (RG-434)

An Environmental Guide for Texas Auto Body Shops (RG-432)

An Environmental Guide for Automotive Repair Shops (RG-308)

A Model Environmental Management System for Local Governments (RG-437)

Public Drinking Water: A Guide for Local Governments (RG-422-LGG-2)

Quarterly Visual Monitoring of Storm Water Runoff: A Guide for Industries Operating under the TPDES Multi-Sector General Permit, TXR050000 (RG-403)

Steps to Obtain Construction Permits for Storm Water Discharges (RG-436)

To order these publications, call 512-239-0028 or visit www.tceq.state.tx.us and under the site navigation bar, click on the link "Forms and Publications." ■

EPA Offers CARE Grants (continued)

conference calls the EPA will conduct. Conference calls are scheduled for Feb. 11 and Feb. 27.

The EPA anticipates awarding CARE cooperative agreements in two levels. Level I cooperative agreements range from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and will help establish community-based partnerships to develop local environmental priorities. Level II awards, ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 each, will support communities that have established broad-based

partnerships; have identified priorities for toxic risks in the community; and are prepared to measure results, implement risk-reduction activities, and become self-sustaining.

In 2007, more than \$3 million was awarded to more than 20 communities.

Information about the CARE program, applying for the 2008 grants, and recipients of previous cooperative agreements is available at EPA's Web site at <www.epa.gov/care>. ■

CALL ON US Toll Free & Confidential: 1-800-447-2827

Get free, confidential help with questions on air, water, waste, or pollution prevention issues from this special section of the TCEQ. SBLGA works for you by:

- providing local environmental assistance when and where it's needed;
- communicating technical information in plain language; and
- giving small business and local government a voice in TCEQ rule and policy making.

On the Web at: www.sblga.info

SBLGA is entirely separate from TCEQ's enforcement program.

You are currently on our subscription list to receive the quarterly rules update, The Advocate. Instead of receiving the paper copy in the mail, you have the option of receiving e-mails from us when we post the latest issue in PDF format on our Web site at <www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm_exec/forms_pubs/pubs/pd/pd-006.html>.

If you would prefer e-mail instead of the printed copy, please e-mail us at <sbap@tceq.state.tx.us>. Be sure to let us know the name your subscription is under and the e-mail address you would prefer us to send to, if different from the one you use to contact us.

Disclaimer: This regulatory guidance publication does not take the place of the full, official TCEQ rules. It is intended only as a general explanation about selected parts of the rules. If you have questions about any information contained in this periodical, contact us at 800-447-2827.

The Advocate is published quarterly by the Small Business and Local Government Assistance (SBLGA) Program of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSISTANCE DIVISION, MC 106
TEXAS COMMISSION ON
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