



SMALL BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
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Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission

Small Business

# The Advocate

For and about small businesses affected by environmental regulations

Healthy Environment. Strong Business. Good Sense.

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## Site Visits Highlight FY 1999 Outreach Activities

Hundreds of small businesses throughout Texas are turning to the TNRCC's Site Visit program for free, confidential help in identifying and resolving environmental compliance problems. The program, launched in late 1997, now trails only the 1-800-447-2827 hot line as a top outreach activity for the agency's Small Business and Local Government Assistance section (see box).

The free on-site compliance assessments are available to any independently owned and operated Texas business with

100 or fewer employees. An environmental consultant under contract with the SBLGA conducts the assessment and then sends a report to the business describing any compliance deficiencies observed and recommending actions that could resolve problems and reduce or prevent pollution.

In FY 1999, SBLGA conducted 225 site visits at small businesses. These included 40 site visits at businesses in Texas border communities, a special focus of the program, thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant was specifically earmarked for site visits to small businesses along the Texas border, from El Paso to Brownsville.

### Beyond Site Visits

Small businesses that correct all compliance deficiencies identified during a site visit are eligible for the Compliance Commitment (C<sup>2</sup>) Partnership, a new program that promises to reduce regulatory burdens even more. Businesses that apply and are accepted into the C<sup>2</sup> Partnership will receive a Certificate of Recognition from the TNRCC entitling them to a one-year exemption from routine field inspections. The C<sup>2</sup> Partnership provides incentives and support to small businesses and helps them develop and implement ongoing improvements to their environmental management programs. C<sup>2</sup> now counts 12 businesses being considered after its first full year of operation. ■

## Environmentally Correct = Economically Sound

Lancaster Furniture is proof positive that environmental investments can produce significant economic returns. Following TNRCC technical recommendations, this Harris County company implemented new technology that reduces air pollution while increasing painting efficiency. As a result, during 1998 Lancaster slashed its paint and coating expenses 50 percent and cut regulatory reporting tasks to almost nil.

At Lancaster Furniture, the focus was on volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These pollutants evaporate into the air from such substances as paint, thinners, and solvents. VOCs contribute to ground-level ozone, the major threat to air quality in southeast Texas. Based on TNRCC recommendations, the company invested \$8,000 to purchase more efficient high-volume low-pressure spray guns and related equipment and train employees in their proper use. VOC emissions dropped from just under 25 tons in 1996 to 16 tons in 1998 while annual expenditures on paints and coatings plummeted from \$69,000 to \$35,000.

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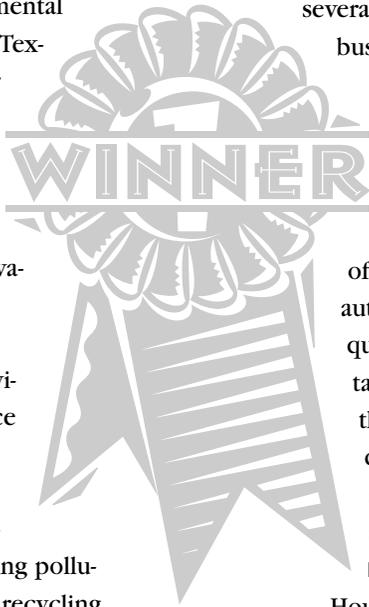
### Small Business & Local Government Assistance Outreach Activities

Hot line calls received .....	3,356
Site visits made .....	225
Staff presentations .....	94
Workshops sponsored .....	32
Workshop participants .....	615
C <sup>2</sup> Partnerships .....	12 pending

# Your Time to Shine!

Let Texas know about *your* achievements! The TNRCC and Gov. George W. Bush are looking for candidates for the 2000 Texas Environmental Excellence Awards. "Texans are proud of our natural resources, and we recognize the need to take personal responsibility for the conservation of those resources," said Gov. Bush. "The Texas Environmental Excellence Awards emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship by recognizing pollution prevention and recycling projects that are innovative, voluntary, and effective."

For more information on the awards, call the TNRCC at 512-239-3150 or 512/239-3164 or download an application from <http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/oppr/txawd/txawd.htmlpacket>. Completed applications must be postmarked by November 15, 1999. Winners will be honored in Austin on May 2, 2000. ■



# Regulatory Roundup FY 1999

During FY 1999, the Texas Legislature passed several bills to streamline environmental regulations and processes. In addition, the TNRCC amended several rules to make it easier for businesses to understand and comply with regulations.

- **De minimis standard**—Senate Bill 766 allows the TNRCC to establish a de minimis standard, a low level of emissions below which air authorizations will not be required. The small business assistance program has been part of the TNRCC team working to define the de minimis standard, slated to be formally proposed as a new rule in FY 2000.

■ **Public notice**—Under House Bill 801, the TNRCC can allow small businesses seeking air permits alternative means of notifying the public about the process. The agency is proposing that small businesses be able to publish notice in a newspaper's legal section rather than in the commercial section, where ads are 5 to 10 times the cost. This change is expected to result in significant savings for small businesses seeking air permits.

■ **Used oil**—The TNRCC amended rules on used oil recycling that improve their readability without making substantive changes. The rules encourage recycling as a way to protect against pollution from used oil.

■ **Tax exemption for environmental protection**—The TNRCC amended Proposition 2 rules that certify eligibility of pollution control equipment for property tax exemptions. The changes will make the program easier to use. Since November 1994, the "Prop 2" program has processed more than 4,000 applications, of which 9 percent have been from small businesses. Total estimated tax savings exceed \$5.5 billion. ■

## New Guide for Small-Quantity Generators

The Small Business and Local Government Assistance Section has just completed the publication *Industrial and Hazardous Waste: Rules and Regulations for Small-Quantity Generators (RG-234)*. For a free single copy of this book, call: 1-800-447-2827; on the Internet, go to [www.tnrcc.state.tx.us](http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us) and follow the link for "Publications." ■

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Company owner and president Jim Lancaster called the results "win-win" for everyone. The VOC reductions help ensure a healthier environment for the 65 employees who work at Lancaster Furniture as well as for the community at large, he said. And the cost saving in materials means the company has been able to avoid raising prices, a further boost for its competitive standing. The VOC reductions also put the company well under the 25-ton threshold that triggers permitting requirements, allowing company staff to concentrate instead on the business of making furniture.

Lancaster credits TNRCC assistance with raising his overall awareness of environmental costs and issues in running a business. After taking a close look

at the company's waste stream, Lancaster realized that he could save disposal fees and make a healthier work environment by replacing certain products with less hazardous alternatives and recycling others. Now, for example, the company uses sponges instead of rags in initial stages of staining, allowing employees to recapture a considerable amount of stain that otherwise would have been tossed out on used rags. Stain recycling also has cut down drastically on the volume of rags hauled away for disposal at a cost of \$300 a barrel.

"We try to be a responsible corporate citizen," Lancaster said. Sounds like a good business practice that pays off on the bottom line. ■



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**Toll Free 1-800-447-2827**  
(All calls are confidential)

**Fax: 512-239-1065**

**Web Site: [http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/small\\_business](http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/small_business)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nov. 9 – Dallas Small Business Advisory Committee

Nov. 10 – Fort Worth Small Business Advisory Committee

Nov. 15 – Texas Recycles Day;  
application deadline for Texas Environmental Excellence Awards

Dec. 2 – Houston Small Business Advisory Committee

Dec. 3 – Austin, Compliance Advisory Panel Meeting

Dec. 9 – Beaumont, Golden Triangle Small Business Advisory Committee

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