

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Report on Customer Service March 1, 2020 – February 28, 2022

Introduction

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is the state's leading environmental agency and provides many services related to air and water quality, water supply, and waste management. Almost all of our services require interaction with our customers, both Texans and people in other states and countries.

Texas Government Code Chapter 2114 requires state agencies to establish customer service standards, called a *Compact with Texans*. Under our compact, we commit to:

- Respond to requests for public information through telephone calls, correspondence, and e-mail in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner, in accordance with all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations;
- Provide clear, concise, and accurate information related to all applicable permitting, licensing, and registration procedures through written materials, phone assistance, and our official website;
- Establish channels for public participation in all aspects of our operations including, but not limited to, permitting, rulemaking and compliance, and customer service assistance;
- Track and respond to customer service complaints in a timely manner; and
- Maintain safe, clean, and accessible facilities across the state.

Chapter 2114 also requires state agencies to gather information about certain service elements provided by that agency (such as internet services and complaint-handling) and then report every two years on this gathered information. TCEQ developed the Customer Satisfaction Survey to gather this information and to help verify compliance with our Compact with Texans.

About our Survey

We designed the survey to be used by all customers that interact with us or our website. The survey contains 11 questions; the first three questions ask the customer to give general information about themselves, while the remaining questions ask them to rate their level of satisfaction with certain service elements (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest). Next is a comment section, followed by an optional contact information section.

Starting in February 2020, the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) and Office of the Governor (OOG) required agencies to measure customer satisfaction with eight new standard survey questions. Per the new requirement, TCEQ's customer survey was revised in March 2020 to replace previous questions four through 11 with the eight newly required questions. During this period of time, as we implemented the new survey questions online and phased out the previous version of the paper surveys maintained by each TCEQ regional office, we continued to receive surveys containing the previous questions. For a copy of our revised survey, containing text in English and Spanish, see <u>Appendix B: Customer Satisfaction Survey</u>.

Distribution

The most cost-effective method for reaching all of our customers is to distribute a link to the online survey. That link is <u>tceq.texas.gov/customersurvey</u> for the English version and

tceq.texas.gov/encuesta for the Spanish version. You will find these links in many locations, including:

- web pages
- response emails from program-area email boxes (i.e., proxy boxes)
- emails from GovDelivery
- letters
- publications

In addition to the online survey, there are also hardcopies of the survey available in the foyer of all regional offices and at TCEQ headquarters in Austin. This provides survey access to anyone visiting our offices. Staff also commonly distribute hardcopies to customers that are undergoing an investigation.

Defined Customers

Our survey is open to all Texans and other customers, including:

- environmental group representatives
- industry/association representatives
- owners/employees of a regulated company
- public/elected officials
- attorneys
- consultants
- neighborhood/community representatives

Some of our customers may not be aware of the survey. This could include customers who never interact with us and our website, as well as some customers who interact with us solely by phone.

Survey Design Notes

The following subsection describes some of the potential nuances of the data, based on design.

In question one, customers identify themselves by selecting one of the eight customer categories. Many customers can fit into multiple categories, which might cause a customer to accidently score a survey under a potentially less accurate category. For example, a customer that marks *Citizen* on the survey, but bases their satisfaction solely on their interactions with us as a consultant, would impact the *Citizen* statistics instead of the *Attorney/Consultant* statistics.

In addition, a customer that selects the customer category *Other* might fall into another customer category. This could impact the *Other* statistics instead of the statistics for another customer category.

On survey questions four through 11, the customer rates their satisfaction level on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest. One customer might rate differently than another because of different interpretations of this scale (e.g., one customer's five might be another person's three).

Also, customers can base their survey on one or many TCEQ-related interactions; meaning one customer might base it on several interactions, while another could base it on only one (such as one telephone call, or a visit to our website). If a significant number of customers base their surveys (or specific survey questions) on older interactions, this can cause issues when attempting to identify trends.

Distribution Notes

Our online distribution system allows anyone with internet access to submit a survey. This means that non-customers can submit surveys, and customers can submit duplicate surveys (i.e., surveys from the same customer within the same timeframe about the same subject). To improve the accuracy of our results, we do not accept duplicate and non-customer surveys.

Processing

When we receive a survey, we first verify that it is not a duplicate survey, and that it came from one of our customers. Next, we determine which program area(s) would benefit from the information and send it to them. This includes customer suggestions for improvements to our services. We also check the survey to see if the customer needs any assistance. For example, if a customer is very unsatisfied with the ease of finding information on our website (i.e., enters a score of one for previous survey question number 10), we may:

- Contact them to find out what information they were looking for;
- Send the information to them if they could not find it;
- Ask for their suggestions to improve our website; and then
- Send those suggestions to the appropriate program area.

An important note: we can only provide assistance to those who enter their phone number or email address in their survey. The time it takes to provide assistance varies, depending on the type of assistance needed.

Data

Received Surveys

During this reporting period, we received 2,035 surveys—144 hardcopy and 1,891 online. See Table 1: *Total Received Surveys* for a comparison to the previous reporting period (March 1, 2018 through February 29, 2020).

	Previous Period	This Period	% Difference
Total Hardcopy	623	144	-77%
Total Online	1,957	1,891	-3%
Total	2,580	2,035	-21%

Table 1: Total Received Surveys

Costs

Some of the variables needed to determine the total cost for our survey are not available. For example, some surveys might require time from four or more staff members in order to provide the customer with an appropriate response, but we do not log their time or wages because it would impact the speed of our response time and increase staff costs from the time spent logging this information. However, we can estimate some of the costs associated with our survey.

One of the costs associated with our hardcopy survey is postage (i.e., we pay for the mailing costs when the customer returns the survey). We received 144 hardcopy surveys during this period; the current rate for mailing a one-ounce business-reply letter is \$0.69, so we estimate our postage cost at \$99.36. Our hardcopy survey also has an associated publication cost; however, we did not print any surveys during this period. Thus, the total publication cost was not included in the report. For our electronic survey, excluding staff costs, we estimate there to be zero cost because there are no direct costs for this distribution method.

Limitations

During this reporting period, 352 surveys (17% of the total submitted) were received without any contact information. We cannot determine a precise number of customers for these surveys; therefore, we based many of the values in the <u>Survey Results</u> section on the number of surveys received, rather than the number of customers surveyed. This allows us to include all surveys in the results.

Response Rate

Typically, a response rate is calculated by dividing the number of customers surveyed by the number of customers who received the survey. Our survey method does not fit this model. As discussed in the previous subsection, we cannot determine the number of customers surveyed during this reporting period. In addition, we cannot determine the number of customers who received a survey, because:

- For hardcopy surveys, logistically, it would be inefficient to track the number of customers who took a hardcopy survey; and
- For online surveys, we cannot track the number of customers who visited our web page and noticed the survey link.

Survey Results

This section highlights the results from our survey during this reporting period. See the following section, <u>Opportunities for the Future</u>, for a discussion on any of the issues mentioned below.

General

The following survey results include surveys received March 1, 2020 through February 28, 2022. In Table 2: *Customer Survey Performance Measures*, you will see general information and results from this period, with an explanation for each of the results in the following bullets.

Survey reporting period	March 1, 2020 – February 28, 2022
Total number of surveys	2,035
Percentage of surveys rating overall satisfaction with TCEQ	74%
Percentage of surveys identifying ways to improve our services	2%
Total estimated customers served	30,171,328
Total customers identified	1,599
Total customers surveyed	Unknown
Total customer groups inventoried	8
Average response time	2 days

Table 2: Customer Survey Performance Measures

- **Total number of surveys:** We received 2,035 surveys from March 1, 2020 through February 28, 2022; 1,400 were received using the new standard survey questions and 635 were received using the previous survey.
- **Percentage of surveys rating overall satisfaction with TCEQ:** A total of 1,968 surveys provided a score for question 11 (question four on the previous survey), *Please rate your overall satisfaction with the agency*. There were 1,447 surveys with a score of four or five (i.e., overall satisfied). This means that 74% of these surveys expressed overall satisfaction with TCEQ, a 0% change as compared to the last reporting period.
- **Percentage of surveys identifying ways to improve our services:** Out of the 2,035 surveys, 35 suggested an improvement, which is 2% of the total surveys.

- **Total estimated customers served:** As the leading environmental agency for the state we serve all Texans, including people that interact with us from other states or countries. We are unable to calculate the number of customers outside of Texas, but estimate the average number of Texans during this period to be 30,171,328 (based on the Texas Demographic Center population projections for 2020 through 2022).
- **Total customers identified:** From the 1,660 surveys submitted with contact information, we identified approximately 1,598 customers that took our survey; 54 customers submitted multiple surveys.
- **Total customers surveyed:** This value is unknown because we allow customers to submit surveys without entering any contact information. We received 352 surveys (17% of the total submitted) without any contact information.
- **Total customer groups inventoried:** As shown on the survey, there are eight customer categories—seven descriptive categories, and the category *Other*.
- **Average response time:** We identified 172 surveys where customers needed assistance. The average time it took us to respond was two days.

Overall Satisfaction

In Table 3: *Overall Satisfaction*, you will see the percentage of surveys with a score of four or five for each customer category and survey question.

The customer categories with the lowest percentages were *Citizen* and *Neighborhood or Community Representative*. The customer category with some of the highest percentages was *Environmental Group Representative*.

The survey questions with the lowest percentages were question four, *agency facilities and ability to access the agency*¹, and question eight, *the agency's complaint handling process*. Survey question five, *staff courtesy, friendliness, and knowledgeability*, received most of the highest percentages.

	Attorney or Consultant	Citizen	Environmental Group Representative	Industry or Association Representative	Neighborhood or Community Representative	Other	Owner or Employee of a Regulated Company	Public or Elected Official	Combined
How satisfied are you with the agency's facilities, including your ability to access the agency, the office location, signs, and cleanliness?	62%	48%	83%	78%	57%	66%	75%	65%	63%

Table 3: Overall Satisfaction

¹ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency was closed to visitors at various times throughout this reporting period.

	Attorney or Consultant	Citizen	Environmental Group Representative	Industry or Association Representative	Neighborhood or Community Representative	Other	Owner or Employee of a Regulated Company	Public or Elected Official	Combined
How satisfied are you with agency staff, including employee courtesy, friendliness, and knowledgeability, and whether staff members adequately identify themselves to customers by name, including the use of name plates or tags for accountability?	86%	63%	93%	89%	74%	81%	89%	79%	79%
How satisfied are you with agency communications, including toll-free telephone access, the average time you spend on hold, call transfers, access to a live person, letters, electronic mail, and any applicable text messaging or mobile applications?	80%	59%	88%	84%	63%	79%	85%	82%	75%
How satisfied are you with the agency's Internet site, including the ease of use of the site, mobile access to the site, information on the location of the site and the agency, and information accessible through the site such as a listing of services and programs and whom to contact for further information or to complain?	77%	53%	81%	79%	56%	74%	74%	72%	67%
How satisfied are you with the agency's complaint handling process, including whether it is easy to file a complaint and whether responses are timely?	59%	51%	84%	69%	27%	60%	75%	66%	63%

	Attorney or Consultant	Citizen	Environmental Group Representative	Industry or Association Representative	Neighborhood or Community Representative	Other	Owner or Employee of a Regulated Company	Public or Elected Official	Combined
How satisfied are you with the agency's ability to timely serve you, including the amount of time you wait for service in person?	79%	58%	89%	87%	53%	76%	86%	82%	74%
How satisfied are you with any agency brochures or other printed information, including the accuracy of that information?	69%	51%	83%	73%	53%	67%	77%	79%	66%
Please rate your overall satisfaction with the agency.	84%	57%	88%	84%	63%	78%	84%	80%	74%

Descriptive Statistics

You can find the following information in <u>Appendix A: Survey Descriptive Statistics for March 1</u>, <u>2020 – February 28, 2022</u>.

- **Number of Surveys Received:** The number of surveys we received for each customer category.
 - **NOTE:** Because we accept incomplete surveys, the total number of scores for each question varies. For example, there are 510 surveys in the customer category *Citizen*, but only 467 have a score for survey question eight, "*How satisfied are you with the agency's complaint handling process, including whether it is easy to file a complaint and whether responses are timely?"*
- **Mean:** The average score.
- **Median:** The midpoint when all the scores (1-5) are in order. If the median is five, it means that 50% or more of the surveys scored a five.
- **Mode:** The most common score.
- **Standard Deviation:** The amount of scoring variability. The bigger the number, the more variation in the scores.

The appendix does not include confidence intervals for the mean (an interval containing the population mean, within a certain amount of confidence). This is because confidence intervals require random sampling, but our sample was not random (e.g., customers submitting multiple surveys). Since we only interact with a portion of our entire customer population, it is very unlikely we could have a true random sample and get significant results.

Survey Comments

For this reporting period, 1,594 surveys included comments. We categorized each comment by its service elements and staff interactions, and also noted if the customer's experience with that service (or staff member) was a positive or negative experience.

Of the 1,007 comments received about staff, 96% of our customers said it was a positive experience, and those customers scored *staff courtesy, friendliness, and knowledgeability* as the

highest on their surveys. Figure 1 shows the total number of positive and negative experiences with staff, grouped together at the office level.

In the 76 comments received about online services, such as our website, 88% of customers indicated they had a negative experience. To address this, all negative comments were forwarded to the appropriate program area management chains for review. Some early actions taken during this period include:

- additional customer service agents to take calls,
- new online tutorials,
- guidance documents, and
- assistance forms to utilize program area web pages more effectively.



Figure 1: Customer Experiences with Staff

Opportunities for the Future

For this reporting period, 74% of surveys reported overall satisfaction with TCEQ. With this value (which is equal to the previous reporting period), we strive to do better. This section suggests opportunities to improve our survey data, increase the amount of survey data, and, most importantly, improve our services.

Improving Survey Data

As mentioned in the subsection <u>Distribution Notes</u>, we do not accept duplicate and non-customer surveys. We will continue to focus on these efforts to further improve our survey data.

Increasing Survey Data

In this reporting period, we continued to improve the visibility of our online survey. Compared to the last reporting period, we received 3% less online surveys and 77% less hardcopy surveys; this may indicate online surveys are more visible on our website. We will continue to test other methods to motivate our customers to submit surveys.

Improving Our Services

Website

The subsection <u>Overall Satisfaction</u> shows survey question seven (*internet site, including ease of use*) had a 1% increase in satisfaction compared to the previous period. It should be noted that we found an increase in satisfaction after switching to the new standard required questions, and we continue to forward suggestions for improvements to our online services to appropriate staff.

Customer Complaints

As discussed in the subsection <u>Processing</u>, we review surveys to see if a customer needs any assistance—this includes customer complaints. In the previous reporting period, the average response time was two days after we received the survey; for this reporting period, the number of customers needing assistance decreased by 25%, and the average response time remained two days after we received the survey. This response time is equivalent to the previous survey and is partly due to the streamlined response procedures we implemented, including a calculated response tool and multiple staff that regularly monitor customer feedback. We will continue to use these response procedures when surveyed customers need assistance.

Phone Etiquette

Compared to the previous reporting period, we received 36% less comments regarding our phone etiquette (a total of 38 comments); 13% of these were positive comments, which is a 42% decrease from the previous reporting period. In addition, overall satisfaction for survey question six (*how we handle telephone calls and e-mail*) decreased 7% from the previous reporting period. This service will continue to be a focus in the next reporting period to determine methods for improving our phone etiquette and to adhere to our Compact with Texans commitment to "respond to requests for public information through telephone calls, correspondence, and e-mail in a timely, efficient and courteous manner, in accordance with all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations."

Appendix A: Survey Descriptive Statistics for March 1, 2020 – February 28, 2022²

	Attorney or Consultant	Citizen	Environmental Group Representative	Industry or Association Representative	Neighborhood or Community Representative	Other	Owner or Employee of a Regulated Company	Public or Elected Official	Combined
Number of Surveys Received	127	740	47	142	20	225	693	41	2,035
Survey Questions					-				
How satisfied are you with the agency's facilities, including your ability to access the	3.9	3.3	4.4	4.2	3.3	4.0	4.2	3.9	3.8
agency, the office location, signs, and cleanliness?	5, 5, 1.3	3, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.3	4, 5, 1.7	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.5	5, 5, 1.5
How satisfied are you with agency staff, including employee courtesy, friendliness, and knowledgeability, and whether	4.5	3.7	4.7	4.6	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.3
staff members adequately identify themselves to customers by name, including the use of name plates or tags for accountability?	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 0.9	5, 5, 1	5, 5, 1.4	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.3
How satisfied are you with agency communications, including toll-free telephone access, the average time you spend on hold, call transfers,	4.3	3.6	4.5	4.4	3.8	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.1
access to a live person, letters, electronic mail, and any applicable text messaging or mobile applications?	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.7	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.5

² A total of 635 surveys that contained the previous survey questions were received during this period; this data was correlated with the new standard survey questions to calculate the Survey Descriptive Statistics in Appendix A.

How satisfied are you with the agency's Internet site, including the ease of use of the site, mobile access to the site, information on the location of the site and the agency, and	4.1	3.3	4.3	4.1	3.3	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.8
information accessible through the site such as a listing of services and programs and whom to contact for further information or to complain?	4, 5, 1.1	4, 5, 1.7	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.3	4, 4, 1.4	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.3	4, 5, 1.4	4, 5, 1.5
How satisfied are you with the agency's complaint handling process, including whether it is	4.0	3.4	4.5	4.2	2.9	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.9
easy to file a complaint and whether responses are timely?	5, 5, 1.2	4, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.1	3, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5,1.2	5, 5, 1.6	4, 5, 1.4
How satisfied are you with the agency's ability to timely serve	4.3	3.6	4.6	4.5	3.6	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.1
you, including the amount of time you wait for service in person?	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.6	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.5	5, 5, 1.4
How satisfied are you with any agency brochures or other printed information, including	4.1	3.5	4.5	4.2	3.4	4.1	4.3	4.3	3.9
the accuracy of that information?	5, 5, 1.1	4, 5, 1.5	5, 5, 0.9	5, 5, 1.1	4, 5, 1.5	5, 5, 1.2	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.1	5, 5, 1.3
Please rate your overall	4.3	3.4	4.6	4.3	3.4	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.0
satisfaction with the agency.	5, 5, 1.2	4, 5, 1.7	5, 5, 1	5, 5, 1.2	4, 5, 1.8	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.3	5, 5, 1.4	5, 5, 1.5

KEY

Mean (average score) Median (middle score), Mode (most common score), Standard Deviation (variability)

Appendix B: Revised Customer Satisfaction Survey

AND NOT	MENTAL OURS	Environmental Quality Comisión de Calidad Ambiental de Texas	Custome Encuesta de							e	y
	Citizen C Environm Represent	iudadano nental Group Representative ante de grupo ambiental Association Representative	vor de identificarse: (marque sólo una Demoistrative de la compactica de	ted Company iñía regulada	Neighborhood Representante d Other (please d	omuni	itario/	de ve	cinda	d	
v	-	ante de industria/asociación	Attorney/Consultant Aboga	io/asesor							
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	General I	nformation	us? (mark only one) ¿Cuál fue la n		cal Assistance Ay			olo una	H)		
		n general g /Licensing Assistance p permiso/licencia	Resolución de problemas Investigation/Inspection Investigación/Inspección	🗆 Other (please describe) Otra	(favor	r de a	lescrit	bir)		
F	low satisfi	ied are you? (on a scale of 1 to 5	, with 5 being very satisfied) ${}_{\dot{c}}Qu\dot{e}$ t_{a}	an satisfecho es	tá? (en una escala de	1 a 5, c	londe	5 es r	nuy sa	ntisfe	cho)
		5 – Very Satisfied 4 – Satisf Muy satisfecho Satisfe		1 – Very unsa Muy insatis	tisfied N/A – Not a sfecho No ap		ole				
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a tl ¿d	bility, and he use of n Cuán satisfe lel personal s	whether staff members adeq ame plates or tags for accourt echo está con el personal de la ager	including employee courtesy, uately identify themselves to o tability? roia, incluyendo cortesía, amabilidad los clientes por nombre, incluyend	ustomers by r	name, including	5	4	3	2	1	N/
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a ¿	complaint	and whether responses are ti	omplaint-handling process, inc imely? acia para el manejo de quejas, incluy	-	•	5	4	3	2	1	N//
H W ¿	low satisfie vait for serv	ed are you with the agency's a vice in person?	ability to timely serve you, inc gencia de servirle oportunamente, in	-	-	5	4	3	2	1	N//
0	of that infor	mation?	ochures or other printed inform nación impresa de la agencia, incluye			5	4	3	2	1	N//
		your overall satisfaction with ifique su satisfacción general con la				5	4	3	2	1	N//
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