

Chapter 8

Educating Maintenance Staff About Stormwater Quality



Employee education should be one of the first steps taken to improve the maintenance program. There are several easy, cost-effective ways to get the word out and increase awareness about how everyday maintenance practices affect stormwater quality:

Make presentations at safety meetings.

Prepare brief informative presentations on various topics, and invite other agency departments, other local agencies, or product manufacturers to speak to your key managers. Possible topics for safety meetings include: erosion control during roadway repair activities, safe alternatives to pesticides applied to right-of-ways, the latest technologies for inlet protection, and upcoming regulations that will affect maintenance activities.

Conduct training.

Consider developing a brief educational video or obtaining slide shows, videos, and other materials already produced by other agencies, such as the City of Charlotte, North Carolina (see Case Study later in this chapter).

Develop tools for maintenance crews.

Prepare laminated cards describing notification procedures for spill incidents and place one in each city maintenance truck. Follow the City of Portland's lead and develop small kits for all trucks, so that maintenance staff have the materials to immediately address small spill situations and protect the storm sewers (see Case Study later in this chapter).

Post signs at maintenance facilities and yards.

Post good housekeeping signs wherever there is a chance that spills and leaks can occur. Make items such as drip pans and spill kits

readily available at these locations to prevent spills and leaks from coming in contact with stormwater runoff.

Involve the maintenance staff in the planned improvements.

Once staff are informed, ask them for their ideas and solutions. Involve them in designing the improvements and empower them to take action immediately when they notice a stormwater quality problem in the field. Use maps to locate the areas of the system where they've observed the most problems and question them about the type of recordkeeping forms that would be most practical while providing the most value.

Recognize staff accomplishments.

Consider a recognition program for staff who regularly practice environmental stewardship, teach others by their actions and are active in developing pollution prevention solutions.

Case Study -



City of Portland Provides Maintenance Crews With Runoff Management Kits

Portland's Office of Transportation has formed a Stormwater Team to evaluate maintenance practices and recommend improvements. The team is in the planning stages of a pilot program to develop and test "runoff management kits" for maintenance trucks. The goal is to supply field crews with the tools they need to prevent sediment or polluted runoff from entering the storm sewers or waterways. The city envisions that the kits will include instructions for field staff and materials such as:

- lightweight tarps to cover exposed materials and eroding banks,
- sediment barriers for storm drain inlet protection, and
- drip pans for trucks and equipment parked at a job site overnight.

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Case Study -



City of Charlotte Develops Educational Videos for Maintenance Staff

A few years ago the City of Charlotte, North Carolina, decided to investigate stormwater pollution practices at its own facilities, before going out and policing the public. They found that their own employees didn't understand that their everyday maintenance practices, such as street cleaning and equipment washing, were having a negative impact on stormwater quality. To combat this problem, the city and Mecklenburg County developed a plan to educate their maintenance staff, from the management level down to the field crews. They produced a slide show and a 7-minute video that describe the local lakes and streams as being the "life blood" of the county. They also conducted in-house training sessions.

The county developed a water quality display containing jars of bioassayed bugs and fish to demonstrate the impacts of stormwater pollutants on aquatic life in the streams. The program has succeeded in increasing the awareness and willingness of maintenance crews to get involved in solving the problem. Staff now understand the link between their actions and the degraded condition of streams in their area. The biggest challenge remaining, similar to other agencies around the country, is getting managers to request and allocate adequate budget resources to continue the program.

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