The "C-Change" Initiative:

1. Change behaviors.
2. Challenge ourselves to re-think how we work.
3. Certify the results on a daily basis.

Tool Box Talk
6/27/2011

Reporting Spills and Environmental Violations

Are you concerned about an environmental situation within your community but don't know where to go for answers Who do I call to report an oil spill or other environmental emergency that poses a sudden threat to public health?

- For emergencies and other sudden threats to public health, such as:
  - oil and/or chemical spills,
  - radiation emergencies, and
  - biological discharges,
- call the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802.
- For pesticide poisoning, call 911 if the person is unconscious, has trouble breathing, or has convulsions. Otherwise, call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

Where do I report a possible violation of environmental laws or regulations?

Fill out the form at epa.gov/tips. If you don't have Internet access, call the EPA office in your area of the country.

Many issues are handled at the local level. You may first want to try contacting your local government office for concerns about trash, litter, strange odors, recycling pickup, and household chemical disposal, including paints, pesticides, oil, antifreeze, etc. You can find information about your local government in the blue pages of your telephone book or by contacting your public library.

For concerns that may not be handled at the local level, the next step is to contact your state environmental agency. Information about state agencies can be found in the blue pages of your telephone book as well.

What's a violation versus an emergency?

An environmental violation occurs when an activity or an existing condition does not comply with an environmental law or regulation. Environmental violations can include (but are not limited to):

- smoke or other emissions from local industrial facilities;
- tampering with emission control or air conditioning systems in automobiles;
- improper treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous wastes;
- exceedances of pollutant limits at publicly-owned wastewater treatment plants;
- unpermitted dredging or filling of waters and wetlands;
- any unpermitted industrial activity; or
- late-night dumping or any criminal activity including falsifying reports or other documents.

An environmental emergency is a *sudden threat* to the public health or the well-being of the environment, arising from the release or potential release of oil, radioactive materials, or hazardous chemicals into the air, land, or water.

Examples of environmental emergencies include:

- oil and chemical spills,

- radiological and biological discharges, and
- accidents causing releases of pollutants

These emergencies may occur from transportation accidents, events at chemical or other facilities using or manufacturing chemicals, or as a result of natural or man-made disaster events. If you are involved in or witness an environmental emergency that presents a sudden threat to public health, you must call the National Response Center at: 1-800-424-8802.

What information can I find on previous spills?

The National Response Center has an on-line query system with oil and chemical spill data reported to the Center. Data received via the National Railroad Hotline (1-800-424-0201) are also available as are reports taken during drills or spill exercises. This system provides full query capability on all non-Privacy Act data collected by the NRC since 1990. Additionally, yearly data from 1982 to 2010 can be downloaded for viewing offline. You can also visit EPA's BP spill site.