

Prevention. That office provides a variety of programs to assist state and local governments. These programs include a toll-free assistance line (800-906-3328); workshops and conferences; fact sheets; and on-site assistance. For example, on April 30, EPA will be participating in a program with the American Public Works Association in Natick, MA, which will cover many of the compliance issues encountered by highway facilities. To register for that workshop, contact the Natick Highway Department at 508-651-7304. From June through July, EPA will be co-sponsoring with the Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance a series of pollution prevention workshops. Those workshops will be held in four locations. On June 4, EPA will be sponsoring a stormwater management trade fair in Boston. Also, EPA has posted many compliance assistance and pollution prevention materials on the Internet. Attached to this letter is a list of Internet sites that may be of particular interest to your agency. For further information about EPA's assistance programs, call the toll-free assistance line noted above.

EPA will maintain a strong presence in this area. Government agencies which have not made a real commitment to environmental compliance--who have not made compliance a priority of the agency's leadership; who have not communicated this priority to their staff; who do not have sound environmental management systems in place--are taking a significant risk.

EPA is committed to holding public agencies to the same high standards that we all expect of private industry. Responsible businesses learned long ago that good environmental performance is a sound business practice. It is a sound governmental practice as well.

In light of EPA's commitment to hold public agencies to high environmental standards, we urge you to take this opportunity to voluntarily audit your agency's facilities. EPA provides incentives for such audits by substantially reducing penalties for those entities that voluntarily discover, disclose, and expeditiously correct violations of environmental law. EPA's audit policy, entitled "Incentives for Self Policing: Discovery, Disclosure, Correction, and Prevention of Violations," may be found at 60 Fed. Reg. 66706 (December 22, 1995) or at www.epa.gov/oeca/polguid1.html.

I hope that your agency will work with EPA to ensure a clean, healthy New England for all of our citizens. If you feel that there is someone in your agency who should have received this letter instead of you, please let us know, and pass this letter on to the appropriate recipient.

I recognize that there is time, cost, and energy required to be a good environmental citizen when at the same time there are enormous pressures and too few resources available to fulfill your core responsibilities. Nevertheless, it is important for all of us that your agency meets its environmental responsibilities. Thank you for your efforts to do so.

Sincerely,



John P. DeVillars
Regional Administrator

Connecticut

Maine

Massachusetts

New Hampshire

Rhode Island

Vermont



Environmental News

Contact: Peyton Fleming, Press Office (617-565-4154)

For Release: April 1, 1998

Release # 98-4-1

EPA Issues 1,700 Letters to Public Officials To Ensure Compliance With Laws

BOSTON - As part of a stepped up enforcement effort focusing on public facilities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency yesterday mailed 1,700 letters to state, federal and municipal officials in each of the six New England states, warning them to make certain their public facilities are in compliance with environmental laws.

The letter was mailed on the same day that EPA took two significant enforcement actions against the R.I. Department of Transportation for numerous violations at a DOT facility in Providence near the Woonasquatucket River. The complaints, which include proposed penalties totaling nearly \$800,000, allege numerous violations of hazardous waste laws and additional violations of the Clean Water Act.

"What's good for the goose is good for the gander," said John P. DeVillars, EPA New England Administrator. "Public agencies must be held to the same high standards as private industry. We intend to see that they are. Government agencies which have not made a real commitment to environmental compliance are taking a significant risk."

DeVillars said the DOT case is a glaring example why the EPA's New England Office is focusing increased enforcement attention on publicly-owned facilities throughout the region.

DeVillars said his office has filed 255 enforcement cases against public agencies since the public agency initiative was launched in 1994 and more cases will be forthcoming as more EPA inspections are done in the coming months.

EPA filed 77 cases against federal, state and local agencies in New England last year. The cases in Massachusetts included a groundwater pollution action against the Massachusetts Military Reservation on Cape Cod, a hazardous waste violation action against the Department of Public Works in Haverhill and numerous municipal cases involving violations of safe drinking water standards, underground storage tank requirements and wastewater discharge requirements.

"I recognize that public agency managers have near-overwhelming demands and all too little resources to meet them," DeVillars said. "Nevertheless, it is important that agency heads meet these environmental responsibilities. We appreciate their efforts to do so."

VISIT EPA's WEB SITE HOME PAGE FOR NEWS AND INFORMATION: <http://www.epa.gov/region01>

The violations in Rhode Island were discovered during a multi-media inspection at the DOT complex on March 31, 1997. The most serious violations involved DOT's improper handling and storage of large amounts of hazardous waste, much of which was stored illegally at a DOT storage building. The facility, which covers an entire city block, includes vehicle maintenance facilities, a storage building, offices and a workshop.

EPA inspectors found 938 containers filled with various hazardous waste materials, including solvents adhesives, varnish, sealants, paints and paint thinners. Of the 938 containers, 116 were open, and 72 were spilled or leaking. Most also were unlabeled. A subsequent investigation revealed that the materials had been stored at the facility illegally since 1995.

EPA investigators also discovered numerous violations of the Clean Water Act, including spill-prevention violations pertaining to petroleum storage as well as actual illegal discharges of oil into the Woonasquatucket River.

"The scope and severity of the problems is disturbing," DeVillars said, referring to the Rhode Island case. "I'm particularly troubled by the hazardous waste storage problems, which not only posed a threat to the environment but also constituted a very serious fire hazard to the neighbors, DOT employees and emergency response personnel."

To help public agencies come into compliance, DeVillars said technical assistance is available through the EPA's Office of Assistance and Pollution Prevention. The assistance program includes a toll-free assistance line (1-800-906-3328), workshops, conferences, fact sheets and on-site assistance.

ATTACHMENT

LIST OF HELPFUL INTERNET SITES

Below is a list of Internet sites that may help your agency comply with environmental laws. It is by no means exhaustive. You can reach many of these sites through EPA's home page, which is located at www.epa.gov.

Information on EPA Region I New England's compliance assistance activities:

www.epa.gov/region01/steward/necat

Information on hazardous waste laws and regulations: www.epa.gov/oswer

- A good pamphlet on the requirements of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), entitled "RCRA: Reducing Risk from Waste," can be found at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/publicat.htm.

Information on Clean Water Act laws and regulations: www.epa.gov/ow

- The following site has information on many Clean Water Act topics, such as municipal waste water treatment and the National Pollutant Discharge System (NPDES) permit program: www.epa.gov/ow/topics.html.
- The following site has information on EPA's oil spill program, including Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure Plan requirements: www.epa.gov/oilspill.
- The following site, which is not an EPA site, contains educational information on nonpoint source pollution for municipal officials: www.lib.uconn.edu/canr/ces/nemo.

Information on the Clean Air Act: www.epa.gov/oar

- "The Plain English Guide to the Clean Air Act" can be found at www.epa.gov/oar/oaqps/publicat.html

Information on the Toxics Substances Control Act: www.epa.gov/internet/oppts

Library of pollution prevention resources: www.epa.gov/opptintr/library/libppic.htm

In addition, the state environmental agencies have their own Internet sites. These include:

- www.state.ma.us/dep (for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection)
- www.state.me.us/dep (for the Maine Department of Environmental Protection)
- www.state.nh.us/des (for the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services)
- www.anr.state.vt.us (for the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources)
- www.state.ri.us/dem (for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management)
- <http://dep.state.ct.us> (for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection)



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 1
JOHN F. KENNEDY FEDERAL BUILDING
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02203-0001

38 APR -6 AM 11:58
CAMBRIDGE MA.

March 30, 1998

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

MARGARET DRURY
CAMBRIDGE CITY CLERK
795 MASSACHUSETTS AVE
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139 3201

Dear Sir/Madam:

Today, EPA issued complaints against the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for violations of two environmental statutes. The complaints seek a combined penalty of approximately \$800,000.

These cases are examples of the increased attention EPA is focusing on environmental compliance at public agencies. Unfortunately, we have found that some agencies do not take their environmental obligations as seriously as they should. We have found numerous violations of laws designed to ensure clean air; to protect the quality of our rivers, lakes, and coastal waters; to safely store and dispose of hazardous wastes; and to preserve the safety of our drinking water.

The failure of public agencies to meet environmental requirements is simply unacceptable. Government at all levels--federal, state, and local--must set an example for others to follow. Citizens have every right to expect that their government will observe the rules of this country. In New England, EPA is devoting significant resources to ensure that public agencies receive and act on that message.

In 1993, I launched an enforcement initiative targeted to public agencies. Since that time, EPA's New England office has filed 255 cases against public agencies. We are not letting up. Last year, EPA filed 77 cases against federal, state, and local agencies in New England. These cases included actions to address groundwater pollution at the Massachusetts Military Reservation on Cape Cod; hazardous waste violations at a City of Haverhill, MA, Department of Public Works facility; and numerous violations of safe drinking water standards and wastewater discharge requirements in municipalities across the region.

EPA also is extending a helping hand to agencies through our Office of Assistance and Pollution

Consent Communication #6

5-260

A communciation was received from John P. DeVillars, Regional Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting a letter regarding complaints against the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for violations of two environmental statutes.

In CityCouncil April 13, 1998

PLACED ON FILE