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# What This Manual Can Do For You

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## **A Handbook for All Stakeholders**

This document is a user's manual for public participation activities in the permitting process. In the same way that a user's manual explains how a car or an appliance works, this manual explains how public participation works in the RCRA permitting process and how citizens, regulators, and industry can cooperate to make it work better.

EPA teamed up with a diverse group of stakeholders from the environmental community, industry, and government agencies to produce this manual. The manual emphasizes the importance of cooperation and communication, and highlights the public's role in providing valuable input during the permitting process. The manual also furthers EPA's commitments to early and meaningful involvement for communities, open access to information, and the important role of public participation in addressing environmental justice concerns.

EPA wrote this manual to help all stakeholders in the permitting process. Here is how the manual can help you:

### ***If you are a citizen...***

This manual provides a clear description of the many public participation activities that are required by federal regulations. The manual also points out steps that agencies, company owners, and public interest groups can take to provide more public input into the process. In this manual, you will also find a list of people and organizations that you can contact to learn more about the permitting process and about community organizing.

### ***If you are a government regulator...***

This manual provides specific details about public participation requirements and outlines EPA's current policies. The manual also explains activities that you can conduct to provide better information to the public and to invite more public input into your RCRA permitting work. By reading this manual, you will learn how to open a dialogue with other stakeholders, how to assess communities and be sensitive to their concerns, how to plan for public participation, how to fulfill all the regulatory requirements, and how to go beyond the requirements.

### ***If you are a member of a public interest or environmental group...***

Reading this manual will let you know what public participation events are required under federal regulations, and how your organization can get involved. It provides useful tips, based on the experience of public participation practitioners, on how to interact with other stakeholders and

how to conduct public participation activities. The manual also provides contacts and publications that you can tap into for more information.

***If you own or operate a hazardous waste management facility...***

This manual describes when and how to conduct the public participation events involved in the permitting process. It points out the events you are responsible for and lets you know how the permitting agency will conduct other activities. By reading the manual, you will find out how to interact with the community around your facility, and how to be sensitive to their concerns, and how to cooperate and communicate with all stakeholders. The manual also describes public participation opportunities you can provide that go beyond the requirements.

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## **Other Sources of Information**

EPA is compiling a reference list of public participation and risk communication literature. For this list, EPA is interested in the following subjects areas: community organizing, community involvement and participation, environmental justice, risk communication, creative problem-solving, alternative dispute resolutions, participatory activities, environmental activism, and information-sharing. EPA is not interested in technical documents or data related to permitting. To initially solicit items for the reference list, EPA published a notice in the Federal Register (61 FR 15942). EPA intends to update the list periodically; any additional items people wish to propose for inclusion in the reference list may be submitted to the attention of the RCRA Permits Branch, Office of Solid Waste (5303W), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street SW, Washington, DC 20460. Please do not send the original document. Include the full names of all authors, full titles, publisher, date of publication, city where the work was published, an abstract, and an address and/or phone number where one can write or call to obtain the publication (if applicable).

An initial draft of this reference list is available through the RCRA Hotline, or through the RCRA Information Center, in Docket Number F-95-PPCF-FFFFF, (see Appendix A for the appropriate telephone numbers).

If you are not trying to find out about public participation in the permitting process for facilities that store, treat, or dispose of hazardous wastes, then this manual will not be the best one for you. The following are suggestions of places to look for related information:

- C If you are trying to learn more about public participation in the Superfund program, refer to *Community Relations in Superfund: A Handbook* (USEPA, EPA/540/R-92/009, OSWER Directive 9230.0-3C, January 1992).
- C If you are trying to learn more about the siting of hazardous waste management facilities prior to permitting, you will most likely need to contact your local or state officials. See Appendix B for a list of state agency contacts. EPA is planning to issue guidance on this

topic during 1996. Contact the RCRA Hotline (see Appendix A for the number) for more information.

C If you are trying to learn about hazardous substances (other than wastes) stored by facilities or amounts of toxic substances released to the environment, you will want to find out more about the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), or and the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI). Call EPA HQ, your Regional Office, or the RCRA/Superfund Hotline (see Appendix A for phone numbers ) for more information. Information on accessing EPA data is available in Appendix R.

C If you are trying to find out about how the public can participate in siting municipal waste landfills, refer to *Sites for Our Solid Waste: A Guidebook for Effective Public Involvement* (USEPA, EPA/530-SW-90-019, March 1990).

If you are unsure about whether a facility in your area will need a RCRA permit, you can contact your State agency or your Regional EPA office (see the Appendices A and B for numbers).