

## Wisconsin Printers Move Toward “Green” Printing

MADISON — Wisconsin is moving toward becoming the first “green” printing state by both encouraging and rewarding printers for reducing their environmental impact under two innovative projects on which the Department of Natural Resources and the printing industry in Wisconsin are collaborating.

The three-year projects are financed by a special innovation grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Industry members and the DNR are cooperating to streamline and simplify the regulations for printers; especially those associated with the air permit process. The projects also reflect the industry’s interest in developing alternative approaches to air permits that will improve compliance with environmental requirements as well as providing incentives for superior environmental performance. Self-certification approach for small print operations.

For small printers, who often find the permitting process difficult and confusing, the grant is helping to develop an Environmental Results Program, modeled after similar efforts in Massachusetts. The goal of the pilot project is to develop a self-certification approach designed to improve compliance with air, water and waste regulations.

“Under the Environmental Results Program, small printers will see less of an administrative burden, and the regulatory requirements should be easier to understand than the traditional regulatory system,” says Renee Lesjak Bashel of the Small Business Assistance Program of the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. “However, we also expect to see significant gains in compliance with the regulations. In Massachusetts, only about 20 percent of the facilities subject to their regulations were meeting their obligations prior to the program. After implementation of the program, a majority of the regulated printers now meet their requirements.”

The features of this self-certification approach include:

- A concise and comprehensive ‘plain English’ workbook for industry that covers all appropriate environmental regulatory programs. The workbook explains which requirements must be met and includes health and safety requirements, pollution prevention and best management practices.
- Training for printers by the Printing Industry of Wisconsin and other industry trade associations, regulatory agencies and technical assistance providers on the workbook contents and self-certification responsibilities.
- Owners must certify annually that their facilities comply with all workbook requirements.
- Inspections. Regulators will inspect a statistical sampling of participating businesses.
- Environmental Business Practice Indicators. These are measures of progress established in consultation with the industry. They cover regulatory compliance and go beyond compliance to such things as pollution prevention and best management practices.
- Evaluations. Periodically, self-certifications and statistical inspections will be reviewed so as to evaluate progress and set or adjust Environmental Business Practice Indicators.

For some small printers, the self-certification program could replace the need for a registration and general operating permit, and for others who are exempt from air permit requirements, the program would meet their need to submit emission reports.

Large printer approach stresses flexibility linked to superior environmental performance

For larger printing facilities, the pilot program allows one permit as part of an Environmental Management System to cover all releases of pollutants into the environment. An EMS uses a continuous quality improvement approach to reduce the air permit burden on both industry and regulators. The EMS permit being developed as an alternative approach, as outlined in Wisconsin’s Green Tier Law, is designed to be equivalent to traditional operation permits.

“The pilot EMS program has three main goals,” said Kristin Hart, DNR South Central Region Air Permit Engineer. “If the pilot is successful, we will reduce hazardous air pollutant and ozone-forming emissions, increase the number of facilities that understand and comply with environmental regulations, and lower the administrative costs to both the state and businesses.”

The EMS permit project for large printers benefits the environment by providing positive incentives to

facilities meeting environmental requirements and willing to reduce emissions even further. The EMS permit is especially suited to large printers committed to superior environmental performance and eager to use innovative and flexible ways to pursue improved economic and environmental performance.

The advantage of an EMS permit is that it allows the facility to build a new working relationship based on stretch goals and flexibility. The facility is treated differently because they are prepared to manage their full environmental footprint, not just the things they are required to do. The foundation of an EMS permit is a 'plan-do-check-act' approach that compels continuous quality improvement. For large printers required to have a federal operation permit, the EMS permit would provide a more flexible alternative.

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For Release: July 19, 2005

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