

Teaching and Learning Environmental Management in Small Rural Communities: Lessons Learned from New Hampshire Hospitals

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Hospitals: 13% of all employees in the state

Similarities:

No staff trained in hazardous materials management

Training not available in rural areas

Employees do not have the background

What is different about environmental management in rural communities?

- Quantity and diversity of hazardous materials
- Access to training
- Computer availability, ability and access



An environmental role for rural hospitals

- Credibility and community trust for health care, and as a leader in public and environmental health
- Connection to health care affiliates: doctors office, dentists, nursing homes and others
- Lead by example

How do people learn about hazardous materials in rural communities?

- Conferences (Formal and Informal Settings)
- On-line
- Reading
- Mentoring

How can environmental management skills be taught in rural communities?

- Networks
- Community college and vocational/technical schools
- On-line (with improved access)

New Hampshire Hospital Research Project

- Emphasis on process of learning
- Divergent information- gap between outcomes
- What is already known about how adults learn?

Environmental Management

- First time that this is perceived as a professional, systematic, legitimate concern worthy of personnel and financial resources
- Managers often do not know how or where to begin

Resources

- Strengths: know organization/business/community and are pragmatic, flexible learners
- Weaknesses: technical knowledge, critical thinking skills, geographic isolation

Conferences

- Language and cultures can clash
- Gap between regulatory theory and practice
- “Crisis management” mode
- Networks and trade associations

Training For Compliance

- Media based (air, water, soil)
- Crisis or funding based topics
- Reactive and punitive
- The bottom rung is only the bottom rung

Beyond Compliance: Thinking of Training in a Different Way

- Revenue generation and cost avoidance
- Systems management strategies
- Regulatory thresholds (staying off the radar)
- Competitive edge

Measurement

- Paradigm shift: putting your operations on your own radar (empowering your business)
- Managing what you measure
- Achieving results with what you measure



Scale

- Rural hospitals need technical resources sized and priced for their needs
- They need to leverage networking whenever possible to combat geographical isolation and lack of human resources



Networking Expansion

- Reaching out to other partners such as community colleges and other health care providers can increase the pool and decrease cost (especially for training and vendor services)

Conclusions

- Higher success rate in state level regulatory communication, assistance, training and compliance
- Lower success rate at federal level

What Can Rural Communities Do to Improve Environmental Management?

- Networks defeat isolation
- Keep information relevant, local and accessible
- Help bridge best practices to regulatory compliance
- Help to create practical means of measuring progress

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