

Proactive vs. Reactive: EPA's Healthcare Compliance Initiative

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently embarked on a mission to step up enforcement at health care facilities due to concerns about possible environmental violations. Hospitals are being asked to verify compliance in areas such as laboratories, power plants, waste storage areas, and vehicle maintenance facilities, to name a few.

Self-Audit Policy

EPA New England launched the initiative after EPA's New York office discovered several violations at hospitals in New York and New Jersey. A self-audit policy was established to encourage swift disclosure and environmental compliance. As part of this policy, EPA contacted hospitals and set up free informational workshops to educate them about their responsibilities under various environmental laws. Hospitals were warned that substandard inspections by EPA could trigger substantial financial penalties.

Follow the Leader

Recently, fourteen members of the Rochester, New York Regional Healthcare/Joint Ventures Corporation signed agreements with EPA pledging to conduct comprehensive environmental audits of all of their buildings and facilities. This number represents almost 70% of the hospitals in the greater Rochester region. For participants who evaluate their compliance with environmental programs and report and rectify violations, EPA has agreed to waive penalties normally based on the magnitude of the violations.

Hospitals in New England may wish to follow the example of Rochester to avoid potential enforcement, which could be on the way soon.

We Can Help

Environmental Compliance Services, Inc. (ECS) has worked for 40 hospitals in New England. Our services include not only environmental and OSHA audits, but also JCAHO applications, mold and indoor air quality evaluations, asbestos surveys, and remediation. We make practical improvements in reducing waste generation, and prepare specific compliance plans for environmental and energy management.

For example, such plans apply to hospitals that house elevators (hydraulic oil); photography, radiology, and other laboratories (hazardous waste); and boilers (air emissions).

ECS provides a full complement of in-house Professional Engineers, Certified Industrial Hygienists, and Certified Environmental Trainers needed to stamp plans and conduct training. Our staff includes former hospital administrators and facilities engineers who intimately understand the hospital culture and work environment.

Our assistance is completely confidential.

For more information, please call (800) 789-3530 or visit www.ecsconsult.com.