

# DEC focuses on preventing pollution

JUNEAU — The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, as a supplement to its recycling efforts in Alaska, has started a program to advise state businesses and industries on ways to prevent pollution.

In May, DEC, thanks to a \$230,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Source Reduction and Recycling Program, launched a program to provide technical assistance to Alaskan businesses on ways they can reduce, recycle and even prevent wastes before they become pollutants or lost resources.

The non-regulatory program addresses all pollutants that enter the air, land or water.

"We historically have regulated the release of pollutants from the end of pipes and smokestacks. But it certainly makes a lot more sense if we provide the technical assistance and information to help businesses change their manufacturing processes so they either eliminate their wastes or reduce the volumes and toxicity.

"The process often can save firms money and produce substantial savings to the public, too," said Dennis Kelso, DEC's commissioner.

Pollution prevention is the elimination or reduction of pollution releases of all types within a particular industrial process. In practice, it examines how materials, production processes and operating practices can be handled to eliminate the release of pollution at the source.

Pollution prevention is the elimination or reduction of pollution systems to recapture and re-use solvents; cutting the use of acids or process water in industrial processes; installing devices to recover materials; installing "closed-loop" systems or devices to recycle materials either on or off site.

They can also include improving a firm's inventory management, modifying its equipment to reduce wastes, and making production changes where nonhazardous materials are substituted for dangerous ones.

"The goal is to stop pollution at its source, not to treat pollution after it is created. We've learned that treating pollution often involves simply transferring it among air, water or land," said David Wigglesworth, DEC's pollution prevention coordinator.

The new program will provide several services:

- An information clearinghouse: Staff will provide telephone assistance to help the public and businesses identify waste reduction opportunities. Literature sources, contacts and case study information is available for review.

A pollution prevention resource library is also being developed in the state's three main regions to provide additional help.

- On-site technical assistance: Staff at DEC currently can provide technical assistance over the phone and provide some on-site assistance. Later the program will provide training to offer even more technical assistance to firms.

- Outreach: Staff will be available to give presentations on pollution prevention to businesses, trade associations, professional organizations and citizen groups.

- Matching grants: Lawmakers this spring approved a Hazardous Waste Reduction Matching Grant program to provide businesses, local governments, labor and other non-profit groups with funds to identify and evaluate methods to implement waste reduction.

Grant application criteria are being

developed now and the program should go into effect later this year.

- Extended services: The program is funding the Alaska Health Project to provide additional waste reduction technical assistance to firms.

Already there are a number of examples of Alaskan firms that have implemented pollution prevention measures:

- A dairy processing company reduced its water usage by 41 percent by improved maintenance, cutting

water usage by 5,800 gallons per day and saving money on water bills.

- A plastic bottle/chemical manufacturing plant reduced its waste to 1 percent from 5 percent in bottle filling by installing a more sensitive float system.

- A tannery shop switched to a less toxic solvent, cutting waste disposal costs.

- A newspaper moved to cut its wastes by recycling silver film

scraps, aluminum plates and excess inks and newsprint, while switching to soy-based inks instead of the more toxic oil-based inks.

"There are a lot of advantages that pollution prevention produces, and some of them can be measured in dollar savings for the businesses that practice them," said Wigglesworth.

To contact the program write or call, David Wigglesworth, DEC Pollution Prevention Coordinator, Box O, Juneau 99811-1800, 465-2671.