

Tool: County-wide Call Center for Stormwater Issues

A one-stop call center for all stormwater issues in the County. Calls will be screened by trained operators and directed to appropriate personnel at each jurisdiction. Call center will be expandable to include other environmental issues in addition to stormwater.

What is a potential Task Force recommendation for implementation of this tool at the conclusion of this process?

The intent of the call center would be a one-stop phone number for all stormwater issues, including complaints, frequently asked questions, reports of violations (such as E&S control and illicit discharges) and other related information.

The call center would serve all participating municipalities and be provided at a fee per an appropriate cost share model (i.e. population, jurisdiction size, calls per jurisdiction, etc.). The center would either be outsourced to a private firm or housed by a regional provider such as Wake County. The call center would have a single phone number and would be promoted heavily through the public education program activities. The number would be posted on all education materials, stormwater department vehicles, local websites, and potentially at all construction sites. The call center would employ trained, full-time staff during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. An answering service would receive calls during evening and weekend hours.

Services provided by the call center would include trained staff to answer frequently asked questions. Information provided by call center staff would be coordinate with the public education activities. If questions cannot be answered or services are required on-site, calls will be dispatched to the appropriate representative at each jurisdiction. As an alternative, trained staff may also be available to provide a screening level site visit to determine if additional technical service is required. All dispatched calls would be addressed within 48-hours. Call center operators would have software (GIS-based, such as IMAPS) to record, map and track all complaints received. The complaint tracking function could be used to identify “hot-spots” within the system or as a component of a risk-based maintenance strategy.

What problems identified by the Task Force (Objectives) does this tool address?

It is understood that a call center on its own does not “address” specific stormwater concerns. However, active use of the call center by citizens to report potential hazardous conditions, illegal discharges and ordinance violations will benefit local stormwater managers in providing quick response and remedy to problems. As such, tool can address seven of the 14 Task Force objectives and may also provide a public awareness benefit for citizens.

What is the minimum regulatory requirement, if any, for this tool?

NPDES Phase II stormwater rules include a public education component, a public involvement component and require a hotline number for reporting illegal discharges. The one-stop call center will assist stormwater managers in meeting these minimum permit requirements.

How is this tool currently applied within Wake County?

A centralized call center for stormwater or environmental issues does not exist within Wake County. Each jurisdiction addresses calls individually as they are received. In most cases, these calls are not logged in any database system. Other options for customers are statewide hotlines such as 1-866-STOPMUD, which can be used to specifically report sediment issues. Lastly, a few jurisdictions have set up a hotline for reporting illegal discharges, as required by their NPDES permit. This program could replace the use of these existing hotlines.

Is there an opportunity for collaboration on the implementation of this tool?

All jurisdictions may participate collaboratively on the implementation of this tool. The collaborative benefits include economies of scale in the cost for setup and operation of the call center.

What is the expected outcome of this potential recommendation?

An easy-to-use, well publicized, one-stop call center responsible for receiving stormwater-related calls and complaints, responding to frequently asked questions, dispatching calls to appropriate personnel within each jurisdiction, and tracking all calls in a GIS database system. The call-center will improve response time to customers, provide an education component, and allow stormwater staff to devote more time to solving problems. The information compiled through the complaint tracking will also be valuable to other areas of the program, including H&H modeling and stormwater system maintenance.