

Keeping Regulators Happy

Regulators don't have to be the bane of your existence. At the most basic level, their mission is to protect human health and the environment. Keeping that in mind, there are many ways you can make your relationship with them less adversarial and more productive.

1. Know which regulations you have to follow and who your regulators are

Are they at the federal, state or local level? Are you regulated by multiple agencies? Find out which agencies/municipalities you are regulated by, which regulations you must follow and how to get in touch with them if you have a question. Keep in mind that several agencies may be involved with one area and their responsibilities may overlap. For example, in Florida, the state issues your stormwater permit and regulates your stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), but the county is responsible for regulating your physical stormwater system (i.e. retention ponds, catch basins, etc.).

2. Know what you need to submit and when you need to submit it

It may seem like common sense, but not everyone knows which reports they need to submit and when they are due. Research it and put it on your calendar so that you don't miss the deadline. If you feel like you may miss the deadline, let them know ahead of time and request an extension.

3. Use them

If you have a question, call your regulator and ask. For example, if you aren't sure how something should be worded, whether they want email or hard copy, etc., just ask them. They are almost always willing to help guide you through the process.

4. Be prepared at all times

Regulators don't always announce that they are coming. Have your files easily accessible (both electronic and hard copy) so that when they ask, you are prepared. Realize that the more you can make staying in line with regulations a part of your day-to-day activities, the more likely you are to keep regulators happy.

5. Don't lie or hide

The truth will come out eventually and time is not on your side. Stay on the up-and-up, do your best and be honest.

6. Different levels of knowledge

All regulators have a different level of experience. Don't be afraid to respectfully question them or ask for advice, depending on the situation.

7. If you get a Notice of Violation (NOV)

Call and talk to them about it. If you feel there is an error, bring it to their attention. If not, talk with them about how you are going to get it taken care of.

8. Schedule a conference

If you have questions about their involvement, schedule a meeting at their offices and discuss the issue. This is especially helpful for new regulations or a complicated issue.

CONCLUSION

Regulators are there to protect health and the environment. Generally, they aren't unreasonable and are willing to help you get through the process. The bottom line? Working with them works!