

July 25, 1990



Thomas C. Jorling
Commissioner

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Regional Water Engineers
Bureau Directors
Section Chiefs

SUBJECT: Division of Water Technical Operational Guidance Series
(1.4.4) **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OPERATORS OF WASTEWATER
TREATMENT PLANTS** (Originator: Andrew M. Weist)

I. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Technical Assistance Program (TA) is to provide a mechanism through which operators of wastewater treatment plants (municipal, industrial, institutional) can be provided training and guidance in the operation of their facility at the facility.

II. **DISCUSSION**

The Operations Assistance Section, Bureau of Wastewater Facilities Operations, will undertake TA projects referred through the following channels:

1. As part of the Integrated Compliance Strategy System (ICSS). First priority will be given to projects referred through ICSS.
2. Regional Offices.
3. Division of Construction Management (under terms of MOU between BWFO and DCM).
4. Wastewater plant operators.

If technical assistance is thought to be a viable compliance option when a facility is in significant non-compliance, it must be agreed upon through the ICSS process. In these instances where the TA is long-term (i.e., over six months), the ICSS strategy should determine whether an administrative order should be initiated. This is to insure that the permittee does not use the technical assistance process as a means to avoid or delay enforcement. It will be the region's responsibility, at the initial technical assistance meeting with the permittee, to advise the permittee of the possibility that an administrative order might be required.

Upon receipt of a regional request for technical assistance, the Operations Assistance Section will review the proposal with the Compliance Section before accepting the referral to insure that the requested assistance is consistent with existing and developing ICSS strategies.

Projects referred via Channels 3 and 4 will be discussed with the region prior to initiation.

Verbal requests must be followed up in writing, giving as much information concerning the problem as possible.

The role of the Operations Assistance Section staff is to provide a service to the plant operator. It is of utmost importance to the success of the Technical Assistance Program that our activities be free from any appearance of "enforcement".

It is also important that the operator understand that we are not taking over operation of the plant. That continues to be his responsibility. We are there to assist him in improving his plant's operation through guidance and suggestions which we feel, based on our experience and knowledge, will be of benefit.

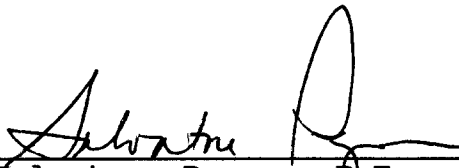
The initial letter to the operator/plant owner should contain the following disclaimer:

It must be understood that the assistance being provided by representatives of the Bureau of Wastewater Facilities Operations, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, is for the purpose of improving the operation of the _____ Wastewater Treatment Plant; that any recommendations made are based on the best judgement of the Bureau's staff, and that these recommendations are not in the form of directives or orders, but offered for voluntary use. It must be further understood that the responsibility for the proper operation of this facility and compliance of the facility with all pertinent laws, regulations, permit and O&M grant conditions remains entirely with the permittee.

Upon receipt of a request for technical assistance, Section staff will prepare a pre-technical assistance report containing all pertinent information concerning the plant, its performance, and the extent and nature of the problems. The regional office will be contacted concerning an initial joint visit to the plant. Results of the initial visit, and all subsequent visits, will be summarized in writing with a copy to the region. The region will be kept informed, either by phone or correspondence, of all developments throughout the course of the project. At the close of the project, a final report summarizing all that has transpired, will be prepared and circulated to all interested parties. (The report will be discussed with the region prior to its release.) Periodic contact will continue to be made with plant staff to monitor the results of the project. The region will be notified in advance of follow up visits to the facility.

Based on experience to date, it is felt that regional staff should be involved in the project, particularly at the outset. The Operations Assistance Section does not play an enforcement role. This is the region's responsibility. Therefore, as indicated above, it is desirable for a regional representative to be present at the initial meeting with the operator/municipal officials at which the problems and alternatives are discussed. A firm posture by the region with regard to possible enforcement, and communication of other ICSS strategy elements, can provide an incentive for serious involvement in a TA project. Although it may not be necessary for the region to be present at all Operations Assistance staff visits to the plant, the regional representative should keep abreast of the progress of the TA project, and when appropriate, help keep the project moving.

The region also has a role to play in seeing the recommendations for plant operation, resulting from the Technical Assistance Project, are implemented.



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