

FOR RELEASE: March 6, 2012
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**Ohio EPA Offers Free Compliance Assistance to
Community Wastewater Treatment Systems**

Faced with investing scarce resources to fix or replace wastewater treatment systems, hundreds of Ohio communities have turned to Ohio EPA's Compliance Assistance Unit (CAU) for free onsite technical assistance. Ohio EPA staff can help treatment system operators improve operations and sometimes save money as well.

The CAU group is a nonregulatory resource whose goal is to bring wastewater treatment plants into compliance with their permit requirements or help ensure that they operate efficiently to begin with. Operating for more than 20 years, the CAU's methods have been field-tested and refined at wastewater treatment facilities across Ohio. Systems receiving assistance range from rural school systems and small villages to large cities. Ohio EPA staff assistance ranges and from a few days of involvement to well over a year in a cooperative partnership.

As part of the services offered, wastewater treatment staff members are trained so they can continue to efficiently operate the treatment system and maintain long-term compliance after Ohio EPA leaves.

Sometimes fixing wastewater problems is as simple as adding chemicals to make sure pH levels stay within an acceptable range for optimal performance. Other solutions can be more complex, as in the case of Firestone Trace, a small community north of Akron that struggled to get its new treatment plant to operate as hoped. The CAU staff worked with the facility's engineers to track down the reasons the facility wasn't working as expected. Using simple chemical analysis to monitor the system's waste stream and microbiology, and drawing on past experiences troubleshooting such systems, an inexpensive solution that zeroed in on the root problem was developed. Once implemented, the solution was fine-tuned and a process control scheme was developed with the treatment plant staff. The Firestone Trace wastewater treatment plant is now in compliance without the need for an expensive capital project.

Typically, CAU staff approach problems by offering inexpensive and effective operational solutions for small communities that do not have the resources to address compliance excursions or litigation. The CAU collects real time operational data and reviews design data at these systems in order to quickly identify the performance-limiting factors.

Not every wastewater treatment system can benefit from the resources of the CAU. Many non-compliant systems may need capital improvement projects to bring them into compliance with permits. Additionally, the entire wastewater treatment system hierarchy needs to be on board, willing to accept change or support the recommendations of the CAU group. This includes not only the operators of the wastewater treatment system, but village administrators, city council members, mayors, facility owners, etc. Success depends on this broad-based acceptance.

Communities interested in obtaining assistance from Ohio EPA's CAU should contact Mark Stump at (614) 644-2001.