

Rationale for Implementation of a Local Hazardous Materials Regulation

Local public health departments are tasked with various inspectional requirements to ensure that the public's health is protected. One niche of local business has typically been overlooked relative to inspections and evaluations from a public health prospective - that is those businesses using, storing or generating hazardous materials. Many of these businesses are located proximal to residential and environmentally sensitive areas.

By establishing a hazardous materials registration and inspection program a municipality can achieve numerous public health benefits including:

- aquifer and drinking water protection
- chemical documentation for emergency preparedness planning
- implementation of toxics use reduction practices
- identification of safer chemical alternatives
- assurance that workers are properly trained
- a decrease in health disparities by reducing community exposure to chemicals through improper storage, disposal or ventilation
- increased transparency of chemicals present in the community by allowing for a public record of chemical inventories
- establishment of the parameters for evaluating impact on new development proposed in a community
- open communication with community stake-holders to identify high risk business or environmentally sensitive areas

A hazardous materials registration and inspection program offers other realized benefits.

To the municipality:

- protection of existing water supplies which prevents the requirement and added cost for development of new water supplies or the purchase of water from outside sources
- reduction in the number of MA DEP reportable release sites in a community and thus removal of the stigma and public perception that the community is "dirty"

To the health department:

- expanding and enhancing the inspector's knowledge base
- personal protective equipment awareness

To the local businesses:

- periodic review of the inventory of chemicals for efficiency of use and ensure that waste storage and disposal timelines are met
- educational opportunities for the permit holders and staff