
COMMUNICATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

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GOALS

The following are discussion issues for the workshop:

- Reasons for communications about enforcement.
- Target groups for communications (e.g., politicians, enforcers, the general public, the regulated community).
- Legal problems in using enforcement information in communications.
- Special activities as enforcers to ensure effective communications (e.g., press release policies and requirements, contributions to newsletters or the trade press).
- How communication is made part of the total enforcement process.
- Means of communication available: written, video, broadcast, other.
- The target group of your country's communications.
- How press interest is attracted on positive stories, since they seem interested in the "negative issues".

1 INTRODUCTION

The workshop focuses on the relationship between enforcement and communication, both instruments in the environmental policy of the national as well as the local government.

2 PAPERS

1. Capacity building support document International Training Workshop: "Communication Strategies for Enforcement," (April, 1996).
2. Case description "The Harbour of Néko" and procedures for the "Communication and Enforcement Game".

3 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

3.1 The compliance challenge

The objective of environmental policy is to direct companies and individuals toward more environmental-friendly behavior through compliance to regulations. Enforcement is one of the most powerful instruments to influence this behavior. The objective of enforcement is to achieve compliance within the regulated community.

One of the main problems for environmental enforcement is the imbalance between the huge amount of companies under regulation and the limited enforcement capacity. It is simply impossible to enforce every environmental law by inspecting each company individually on a regular bases. A more sophisticated approach of enforcement is needed

3.2 Communications as a compliance tool

One of the main instruments to increase the effectiveness of the enforcement is communication. The effectiveness of enforcement depends on the probability to get caught if you violate the rules. The effect this “chance to get caught” has on compliance is based on two elements: the factual chance to get caught and the perception of individuals and companies to get caught. Communication can reinforce the feeling that there is a big chance you will be caught. If the government inspects 10 out of a 100 companies, the factual chance to get inspected is 10%. But if the government communicates about the enforcement-action most likely more than 10 companies feel they run the risk to be inspected. This feeling alone can change their behaviour. This is what communication can do. It makes environmental enforcement more effective by influencing the perception of the enforcement-action.

3.3 Integrated use of enforcement and communication

Like enforcement, communication is an instrument of environmental policy. These two instruments are not independent of each other. If employed in the right combination they reinforce each other, but if handled separately they can do more harm than good. For communication to make enforcement more effective it is necessary to integrate these two instruments. Checking compliance without making this known to the regulated community will prove not to be a very efficient way of stimulating environmental friendly behavior. Vice versa it is in the long run not effective to constantly communicate about enforcement and threaten with compliance checks, while in fact no inspections are made. Communication by itself is not enough. In practice this means a well considered integration of enforcement and communication.

3.4 A strategic approach

A strategic approach for both enforcement and communication is a prerequisite for success. There must be a plan, based on a thorough analyses of the present situation and the specific environmental problem(s) at hand, the relevant target groups and the means of communication at disposal.

An important step in making a plan is the selection of target groups. Who are directly involved (for example the management and people on the work floor of the pollution company), and who are the intermediate target groups (the press and the branch-organization). You can not communicate with everybody about everything. Related to these selected target groups, objectives must be formulated. Objectives for the enforcement action (compliance targets) and objectives for the communication actions (attention, knowledge, public awareness and behavior).

3.5 Game-playing for training in strategic use of communications

To explore the use of communications the participants in the workshop played a game. The challenge in this game was to make the enforcement activities as effective as possible in promoting compliance by supporting the enforcement activities with communication activities with limited resources. Starting with a case description of a government that wants to reduce the environmental pollution caused by careless transshipment of scrap, the participants in the game had to select target groups and communication actions and put them on a timeline for a six-month period in relation with enforcement actions. Acting as the Enforcement Department of the government the participants had to be clear on the kind of communication (tv, radio, newspaper,

meetings, etc.) that should be put in place on behalf of the different target groups (the management of the company, the people on the work floor, the people living in the area, other companies in the area, the branch organization, the local press and media and the national press).

3.6 Evaluation of the workshop

After playing the game the results were evaluated. What did the participants learn from the game and how realistic and applicable was the game experience with regard to the actual practice of the participants?

The game proved to be a successful way of making clear that communication actions are an important management tool for supporting enforcement activities to realize environmental objectives. The game leads to a process of decision making in the group of participants in which the relationships are explored between communication and enforcement.

4 CONCLUSION

Communication objectives and target groups must be well chosen and are essential for an enforcement communication plan, as it proved to be during the workshop. The experiences made clear that it is actually possible to plan communication actions in the process of enforcement. Moreover the game proved to have an educational impact on the participants. It lead to self-evaluation of the way their own work is done at present. Communication strategies, as well as the way of execution, are, however, culturally bound and differs for each situation, perception of the problem and the view of possible enforcement approaches. A mix of communication channels or media and activities is preferable within the limits of available financial and other resources. Most of the participants became aware of the desirability to introduce more communication activities in their own work to get the results they want.

The suggestion was also made to implement the workshop on a structured bases in future programs in combination with the development of an enforcement plan, the communications-game and a role-play of the participants.