UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

SEP 9 1991

OFFICE OF WATER

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Application and Use of the Regulatory Definition of Significant Noncompliance for Industrial Users

FROM: Michael B. Cook, Director
Office of Wastewater Enforcement and Compliance

TO: Water Management Division Directors, Regions I-X
Approved Pretreatment State Coordinators

Background:

On July 24, 1990, the Agency replaced the definition of "significant violation" with the definition of "significant noncompliance" (SNC) [see 40 CFR 403.8(f)(2)(vii) and 55 Fed. Reg. 30082]. This change eliminated the inconsistencies which arose in applying the significant violation criteria and established more parity in tracking violations committed by industrial users. The definition of SNC parallels the Pretreatment Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Guidance (PCME) definition of SNC published in 1986.

This memorandum responds to several questions from States, publicly owned treatment works (POTWs), and industry regarding the application of the SNC definition. One frequently asked question is whether the time frame for determining SNC for technical review criteria effluent violations is a static six month period (i.e., a fixed six month calendar interval) or a rolling six month time frame (i.e., the current day minus six months). POTWs and industry have also inquired whether all data must be used to calculate SNC. The following discussion is provided to promote consistency in the application of this definition. Regions, States and POTWs should determine SNC in the manner prescribed below.

Pretreatment POTWs are required to notify the public of significant industrial users which meet the definition of SNC through publication in the newspaper. The POTW should also use the SNC criteria as the basis for reporting an industrial user's compliance status to the Approval Authority in its Pretreatment Performance Report. According to 40 CFR 403.12(i)(2), **the POTW must report on the compliance status of its industrial user universe at the frequency specified by the State or EPA National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, but in no case less than once per year.** Finally, the definition of SNC is used to determine whether a formal enforcement action against a user is warranted in accordance with the POTW's Enforcement Response Plan (ERP).

Printed on Recycled Paper

Applying the Definition: Use of the Six Month Time Frame:

There are seven criteria set forth in §403.8(f)(2)(vii). Two of these criteria concern violations evaluated over a six month time frame. The Agency intends for Control Authorities to evaluate these criteria on a rolling basis. The EPA's long established practice in the NPDES program is to evaluate SNC for direct dischargers each quarter using data from the previous six months. Similarly, Control Authorities should determine SNC for their universe of industrial users on the same rolling quarters basis using fixed quarters established by the Control Authority to correspond to its "pretreatment year" (e.g., March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 31).

At the end of each quarter, POTWs and States are to evaluate their industrial user's compliance status using the two criteria of the SNC definition which are evaluated on a six month time frame (i.e., the "A" and "B" criteria under the regulatory definition). Under this system, each industrial user is evaluated for SNC four times during the year, and the total evaluation period covers 15 months (i.e., beginning with the last quarter of the previous pretreatment year through the end of the current year). When the POTW is required to publish, it must list in the newspaper all industrial users which have been identified as SNC during the previous year (i.e., the SNC criteria were met during <u>any</u> of the previous four quarters).

If a facility has been determined to be in SNC based <u>solely</u> on violations which occurred in the first quarter of the 15 month evaluation period (i.e., the last quarter of the previous pretreatment year) and the facility has demonstrated consistent compliance in the subsequent four quarters, then the POTW is not required to republish the Industrial User (IU) in the newspaper if the IU was published in the previous year for the same violations.

Use of Industrial User and POTW Data in Determining SNC:

Several POTWs have inquired whether all data, including Control Authority sampling and industrial user self-monitoring, must be used in determining SNC. This question arises from the concern that an industrial user may choose to conduct its sampling efforts at times in which it knows that it is in compliance (e.g., during early morning start-up or during periods in which the industrial process is down). The concern is that use of these unrepresentative data will allow the industry to craft its compliance status such that it will never be in SNC.

The regulation defining SNC clearly requires that <u>all</u> measurements taken in the appropriate six month period must be used to determine a facility's SNC status. Therefore, any and all samples obtained through appropriate sampling techniques which have been analyzed in accordance with the procedures established in 40 CFR Part 136 must be used to determine whether the facility is in SNC.

The General Pretreatment Regulations further state that periodic compliance reports must be based on data obtained through appropriate sampling and analysis, and the data must be representative of conditions occurring during the reporting period [403.8(f)(1)(iv)

and 403.12(g)(3)]. The Control Authority must require that frequency and scope of industrial user self-monitoring necessary to assess and assure compliance by industrial users with applicable pretreatment standards and requirements.

The nature and scope of the sampling undertaken by an industrial user is under the control of the Control Authority through the issuance of an industrial user permit. These permits should specify the sampling locations and sample collection method necessary to ensure that representative samples are obtained for all regulated waste streams. By requiring industrial users to obtain representative samples, the Control Authority will ensure that industrial users do not evade noncompliance through selective sampling of their industrial processes.

Conclusion:

The Control Authority is required to screen all compliance data, whether generated through industrial user self-monitoring or by the Control Authority, to identify any violations of pretreatment requirements. Whenever there is a violation, the Control Authority must take appropriate enforcement action, as defined in its ERP. After this initial enforcement response, the Control Authority should closely track the industrial user's progress toward compliance by increasing the frequency of user self-monitoring, increasing the POTW's monitoring, or both.

When follow-up activity indicates that the violations persist or that satisfactory progress toward compliance is not being made, the Control Authority is required to escalate its enforcement response in accordance with the procedures established in its ERP. **At a minimum EPA expects POTWs to address SNC with an enforceable order that requires a return to compliance by a specific deadline.** When this enforceable order involves a compliance schedule, the industrial user remains in SNC during the period of the schedule (unless the facility returns to compliance prior to the end of the schedule). For example, if the duration of the schedule is two years, the facility should be published in both years. Of course, the POTW should explain in its publication that the violations have been addressed with a formal enforcement action (similar to a "resolved pending" listing on the Quarterly Noncompliance Report).

The definition of SNC provides a benchmark against which the compliance status of an industrial user and the enforcement activities of POTWs can be measured. The concept of significant noncompliance plays a pivotal role in the implementation and enforcement of the National Pretreatment Program. In order for the definition to succeed, it is critical that each Control Authority apply it on a consistent basis. If you have any further questions on this issue, please feel free to call me at (202) 260-5850. The staff person familiar with these issues is Lee Okster at (202) 260-8329.

cc: Cynthia Dougherty
Regional Water Compliance Branch Chiefs
Regional Pretreatment Coordinators
Lead Regional Pretreatment Attorneys