

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services
Joint Agency Public Relations Plan
"The Umbrella"



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Section 1 – Goals, Guidelines & Policies

Background

Charlotte Storm Water Services (CSWS) and Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services (MCSWS) are two distinct agencies. One is operated by the City of Charlotte and the other by Mecklenburg County. Jurisdictions for each agency are separate in function and management.

However, when it comes to matters of public affairs, little difference exists between the agencies. Education knows no jurisdiction. When citizens request service, it matters not where it comes from as long as the service is complete and helpful.

Both CSWS and MCSWS also have NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Permit requirements for public education and public involvement. There are a number of educational efforts that are required to satisfy the NPDES Permit conditions. Several of the education efforts are conducted within the City and Town limits.

For these reasons, it is critical to combine the public relations efforts into one joint plan (the *Umbrella*) that represents Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services.

Goals

The overall goal of the *Umbrella* is to plan strategic methods of communicating with the public to maximize effectiveness and avoid duplication of efforts. All communication methods for both agencies should be included in the plan.

Another goal of the *Umbrella* is to outline and incorporate methods for appearing seamless to public. The public should perceive one joint, cooperative Charlotte-Mecklenburg agency rather than two separate agencies. The goal is to provide good customer service, not change the operations of an agency.

Communication methods shall be planned to achieve the following goals:

1. Demonstrate to the public that Storm Water Services benefits the whole community;
2. Change public behaviors to reduce sources of water pollution;
3. Change public behaviors to protect lives and property from flooding; and
4. Create awareness among employees that they are part of a joint agency.

Measuring Success

The effectiveness of our public relations and public information efforts must be analyzed at least annually. The staff responsible for implementing this Public Relations plan will meet in January of each year to review the attached Implementation chart and determine if the measurable for that item was achieved. The staff will also decide how the success or lack of success in meeting each measurable will impact public relations strategy and spending on that line item for the next fiscal year.

A major component of measuring success toward meeting each goal will be the annual public opinion survey. Questions in that survey should be designed around the four major goals in this Public Relations plan. The timing of the public opinion survey should change to November each year starting in the fall of 2006 to allow the staff to consider survey results when making budgetary decisions for the following fiscal year.

Guidelines

Storm Water Services staff should consider public relations staff as a resource whenever dealing with the public. The public relations staff will be the most familiar with other public interactions and campaigns. This includes media requests, brochures, signage, public speaking engagements, web information, project communications, etc.

Storm Water Services staff should carry out business with the public as though they worked for a joint Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services agency. This includes practicing seamless customer service between City and County staff.

Storm Water Services staff should always seek opportunities to get educational messages across to the public. Always look at an interaction with the public as an opportunity to share our message.

Policies/Protocols

Policies are in place to determine the procedure for certain situations. Five policies exist and should be referred to by Storm Water Services staff for guidance. The policies are:

- *Charlotte Storm Water Services News Media Protocol,*
- *Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services Guidelines for Working with News Media,*
- *Charlotte Storm Water Services Project Communication Plan,*
- *Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services Capital Project Communication Plan, and*
- *Mecklenburg County Water & Land Resources Communicating in a Crisis Plan.*

While each of the above policy documents was written by and for a specific agency within Storm Water Services, the documents are consistent with the goal of a seamless department.

	Tool/Program/Campaign	Goals Addressed	Frequency	Staff	Audience	Measurable	Goal	Distribution Method or Amount	Achieve goal FY07? Y/N	Strategy change for FY 08?
13	SOER—County State of the Environment Report that includes detailed information about surface water quality	1 & 2	Bi-annually/Even-numbered years-June	SSF	elected officials, adults, students			CMGC, CMS and libraries, put on web site		
14	Grease free-reduction in grease down drain-partner with CMUD	2—Fecal coliform		EEO, JAK	Homeowners (cooks), restaurants, apartment dwellers, residents within "hot spot" areas	Public participation in pledge card program	300 pledge cards returned			
15	Water Quality Booklet-Handout describing alternative behaviors	2	Reprint as needed	EEO, JAK	Adults, Homeowners			Public meetings, public displays, public events, door hangers, service requests		
16	Rain Barrel Sales	2—Reduce Runoff	Quarterly	JAK	homeowners	Number of barrels sold				
17	Adopt-A-Stream—Maintain a public involvement program and civic group partnerships so volunteers can "adopt" a segment of creek and keep it clean	2—Volunteer	Ongoing	EEO	Businesses, HOAs, civic groups, adults, students/teachers	Increased number of cleanups	10% increase in cleanups			
18	HHW Slider Card-Definition, disposal, alternatives	2—HHW	Reprint as needed	EEO, JAK	Homeowners, public event participants			Public events, public meetings, service requests		

	Tool/Program/Campaign	Goals Addressed	Frequency	Staff	Audience	Measurable	Goal	Distribution Method or Amount	Achieve goal FY07? Y/N	Strategy change for FY 08?
19	Chamber Main Street—Display with brochures for new residents	1, 2 & 3	Ongoing	SSF	New residents			Display in county booth		
20	New brochures on Fee, Service Requests, Floodplain Construction, Easements	1 & 3		SSF	Fee-payers, property owners, builders			Public events, public meetings, as requested		
21	Stormy's Guide to SW	2	Monitor supply, reprint as necessary	JAK	children			Student programs, website		
22	City Annual Report—provide a report of each of the team's goals and accomplishments	1, 2 & 4	Annually	SDL	adults, elected officials, employees					
23	Flood safety brochure-general flood safety tips	3	Reprint as necessary	SSF, SDL	adults	Produce brochures	June 2006	Public events, public meetings, "Main Street"		
24	Employee Meet N' Greet	4	Annually	SDL	Employees					
25	Drivers Ed Flood Safety Brochure	3	Ongoing	SSF	Drivers Ed teachers and students	Produce and distribute brochures	August 2006	Provide brochures to CMS and private driving schools		
26	Public hearings/info on SWS Fee increases	1	Annual City and County formal budget approval process	SSF, SDL	Ratepayers	Publicize public hearings as required by law and provide information for participants		Utility bill insert, newspaper Notice of Public Hearing		