

The Technical Environmental Survey (TES)

About the Technical Environmental Survey:

What is the Technical Environmental Survey?

The Technical Environmental Survey includes the topics of community information, drinking water, wastewater, solid waste, fuel tank farms and air quality. The survey helps to identify environmental issues relevant to rural Alaskan communities. Most of the questions require a yes/no response and many ask for further information. See pages 47–143 for a copy of the survey and explanations for each survey question. See Appendix I for a copy of the survey without the explanations.

Example

26. Yes No ?

Does the operator maintain a daily log of the water testing results?

When was the last date it was filled?

Each time the operator tests the water for chlorine, fluoride or turbidity, the results should be recorded on a daily log, or form, together with the date and time of the test. This record shows whether or not chemicals are properly added and whether water is properly treated in order to make it safe to drink. ...

Callouts:

- Exclamation mark indicates further action is necessary (points to the downward-pointing triangle above the question)
- Place to mark your answer (points to the checkboxes)
- Survey question (points to the main question text)
- Unknown response (points to the question mark)
- Further information (points to the follow-up question text)
- Explanation of survey question (points to the explanatory paragraph)
- Space to answer further information (points to the blank line)

Why do you use the Technical Environmental Survey?

The Technical Environmental Survey is used to identify environmental issues in your community. The identified issues can then be used to help develop a plan to address these environmental issues.

Who fills out the Technical Environmental Survey?

Any interested person in the community can fill out the Technical Environmental Survey. Only one person needs to fill in this survey. The person completing the survey is not

expected to know all of the answers to the questions. The questions require the help from many people in the community.

Each section on the survey has a box at the beginning that identifies who to ask for information. For example, in the “drinking water” section, the person to ask for information is the water treatment plant operator. You may need to set up appointments with the people you need to speak with in order to complete the survey.

The questions on the Technical Environmental Survey are written so most people can pick up the survey and complete it. This manual provides an explanation for each question on the survey in order to assist the person conducting the survey.

How is the Technical Environmental Survey used in environmental planning?

The Technical Environmental Survey is used in environmental planning to help identify environmental issues and needs in your community and to assess the current environmental conditions. The results of the survey can be used to help develop an environmental plan.

When do you use the Technical Environmental Survey?

The Technical Environmental Survey is used in Step 3 of the environmental planning process described in Part 1 of the manual: ‘Define your community’s needs using environmental assessment surveys.’ See pages 18–22 for more details.

How do you fill in the answers on the Technical Environmental Survey?

Most of the questions on the Technical Environmental Survey require a yes/no response. There is also a space to mark if the answer is unknown (?). *However, the response “?” should only be used as a last resort.* The person filling out the survey should make every effort to contact the right person in order to get a response for each question.

Many questions on the survey require more information than just a yes/no response. There is space on the survey form to write in the information. This information should be filled in as completely as possible. Often, these added comments are the most valuable information. See Appendix I for a copy of Technical Environmental Survey you can complete for your village.

How does using the Technical Environmental Survey help you identify environmental problems in your village?

Most of the questions on the Technical Environmental Survey require a yes or no response. If the symbol ▼ appears above one of the responses, this indicates a problem that requires further action. Some problems are more serious than others, but the same symbol is used for all questions. If the question does not have a ▼ above one of the responses, the answer does not necessarily indicate a problem.

Technical Environmental Survey

Ver. 2.0

Village _____ Date _____

Surveyor & Title _____

This survey is a list of questions about environmental issues that may be present in your village. To the best of your ability and knowledge, answer each question that applies to your village. Most of the questions can be answered with a YES, NO or ? (unknown) response. Many questions will ask for a specific answer that involves time or amounts. Some of the questions will require that you contact the village council or the person(s) or operator responsible for a particular facility, such as the water treatment plant. As necessary, search out the answer to each question using the response “?” only as a last resort. Please note that an exclamation mark ▼ is used to show a response that indicates a problem.

General Community Information

Who to ask: city and/or IRA/Traditional Council, school principal

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. Does your village have a <input type="checkbox"/> city council, <input type="checkbox"/> IRA/Traditional Council or <input type="checkbox"/> both?
Which council is responsible for the sanitation services in your village?
<input type="checkbox"/> city council <input type="checkbox"/> IRA/Traditional Council <input type="checkbox"/> joint ownership/utility board.</p> |
|---|

Many villages have more than one governing council. The purpose of this question is to identify the council(s) that is responsible for making decisions about sanitation services in your village. This way concerns can be directed to the correct governing council.

The sanitation facilities (i.e. drinking water system, sewage system and the landfill) in your village are owned by one of the village governments. Residents in the community, however, often refer to the water plant or the sewage plant as the “PHS” or the “Village Safe Water Plant.” This name can be confusing because some people believe that these organizations own and are responsible for the operation of these facilities. This is not true. The village or Tribal Council owns and is responsible for the safe operation of these facilities. For this reason, it is important to know which village council is responsible for providing sanitation services. If there are operational problems with the facilities, the responsible council can take steps to address the problems.



Village council office in Venetie.

Photo courtesy Bill Stokes

▼

2. Yes No ?

Do the village council(s) regularly collect fees for village services?

If yes, which services? water sewer
 landfill.

If no, how does the village pay for the services?

Providing safe water, safe sewage disposal and safe landfills for a village require money. A village that does not regularly collect user fees will not be able to hire trained operators to properly operate and maintain the village sanitation facilities. If the village wants to improve sanitation services, it is important that the village councils and residents understand that user fees must be collected to pay for those services.

Having a system in place for regularly collecting user fees can be very helpful when applying to the Village Safe Water Program (at the Department of Environmental Conservation) for funding. The Capital Budget Questionnaire awarded fifty points toward funding for water, sewer or solid waste projects if a village had a system for collecting user fees. Another fifty points were possible if your village had identified Operation and Maintenance Costs/Funding. Your village, therefore, has a greater chance of getting funding for projects if there is a system in place for collecting user fees for village services. See Appendix E for a copy of the Village Safe Water Capital Budget Questionnaire.

The Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program, which is part of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, offers management assistance and financial training related to water and wastewater utilities to cities and villages. The RUBA Program is a helpful resource for questions concerning collecting fees for village services. See the Directory in the back of the manual for contact information.

3. Yes No ?

Does your village council(s) receive technical help from environmental/public health programs or agencies?

If yes, whom?

There are many environmental/public health programs and agencies that provide technical assistance to villages in Alaska. If your village council(s) feels that no technical help is being provided to the village, it may be that the resources available are unknown. Being familiar with the programs/agencies and the services they provide can be a useful tool in environmental planning.

For a list of programs/agencies that provide services in rural Alaska, see the Directory in the back of this manual.

▼

4. Yes No ?

Are local pollution problems an issue with the village councils?

If yes, what issues?

Pollution refers to contaminating the air, land or water with materials that are harmful to living things. Examples of different pollution problems that may be issues in your village include: littering in and around the village, an overflowing dump, flooding of the sewage lagoon, unsafe water, improper disposal of batteries, waste oil, fuel spills, abandoned drums and vehicles, and toxic smoke from burning plastics.

The village councils have the ability to make decisions that affect the entire community. If pollution problems are an issue with the councils, there is a greater chance of these problems getting attention. It is important that the council representatives are educated on pollution issues so they are better able to make decisions that will protect the health of the community.



illustration by Natalie Garber

▼

5. Yes No ?

Does the village school have an environmental education curriculum?

If yes, which grade levels?

The school district should include environmental education in the curriculum at all grade levels. Environmental concepts can be included in the school curriculum in all subject areas. There is no need to have a separate class to cover environmental information because with planning this information can be applied to mathematics, language arts, science, history and other subjects.



Third grade class in Emmonak saves aluminum cans for recycling.

Photo courtesy Bill Stokes

Environmental programs that are community-based and centered around local environmental issues can be a very effective way to get information across. They also can benefit the community.

GALENA, ALASKA
The Village of Galena has established an excellent environmental education program in their schools. A major factor in the success of this program is the good relationships established between various programs early on. The environmental education program is the result of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Loudon Tribal Council, the Galena City Schools, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Agreement ensures that environmental education is integrated into all the disciplines for all school-age children. By pooling the resources of all these entities, the schools are well on their way to having a first-rate watershed education and stewardship program that will benefit the entire community.

POLLUTION PREVENTION CONCEPTS ARE OFTEN INTEGRATED INTO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS.

What is pollution prevention?

Pollution prevention means not creating “waste” in the first place. Activities that avoid, eliminate, or reduce waste at its source prevent pollution. For example, using the same canvas bag over and over again at the village store prevents the waste of many plastic bags.

Pollution prevention requires a change in thinking from asking the question “How do I properly dispose of my waste?” to “How can I prevent waste in the first place?”

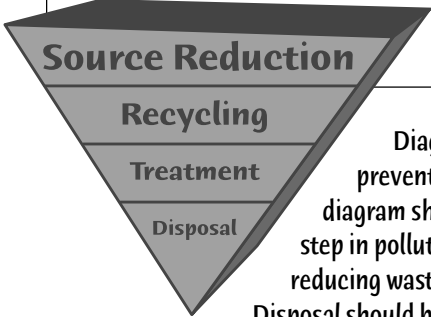


Diagram 1: Pollution prevention pyramid. The diagram shows that the first step in pollution prevention is reducing waste at the source. Disposal should be the last option.



Planting seeds in reused cups.

Photo courtesy Ruth Farrens.



Children in Sand Point make Mexican shakers out of old lightbulbs.

Photo courtesy Ruth Farrens.

Sand Point, Alaska

In Sand Point, AmeriCorps Member Ruth Farrens, focused on working with the school children of the village to teach environmental education.

Some of the projects they worked on included:

- *Reading stories about the environment and coloring pictures of what the stories meant to them.*
- *Planting seeds in reused styrofoam coffee cups and clear plastic juice cups.*
- *Making Mexican shakers out of old light bulbs the children collected, old newspaper and flour paste. The kids painted these and made a dance routine using the shakers.*

One of the rewards of Ruth's work in Sand Point was having a parent tell her that their daughter came home and told the father not to put his pop can in the garbage. Instead, the daughter told him to keep a bag hanging on the door knob in the kitchen for recycling aluminum!

"Teaching the children first was a joy in itself, because they took this teaching home with them and showed their parents, siblings and grandparents what they had learned ... Because of going to our children and teaching them, they have done the job of teaching their elders. It's like a chain reaction. You start on one end and it escalates from there."

—Ruth Farrens, AmeriCorps Member, Sand Point

6. Yes No ?

Does the community have any environmental programs or groups that meet regularly?

If yes, what are they?

One way to involve the community in environmental issues is to form groups and/or begin programs that focus on environmental issues. Environmental groups can be helpful in accomplishing the environmental/public health goals of the community. A committed group that meets regularly and gains the support of the community will be a benefit to the community. Examples of groups or programs that cover environmental issues include: annual clean-up groups, environmental newsletter committees, environmental work groups, and recycling committees. Sometimes, villages include environmental issues within programs such as spirit camps.



Environmental Focus Groups can help accomplish the environmental goals of the community.

Photo courtesy Dan Lung.