

**SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY UNIFIED
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT
COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT
COM 1115**

APPROVED: _____ signed **Date: (Revised 10/11/06)**
Jon Adams
Director of Compliance

TITLE: CUSTOMER SERVICE

SUBJECT: POLICY GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

OBJECTIVE:

Establish policy guidelines for providing excellent overall customer service including, but not limited to, written and verbal communication. Our objective is to have excellent customer service 100% of the time. Excellent customer service does not mean that enforcement efforts are being relaxed. Rather, it clarifies the District's expectation of how we deliver our message.

PURPOSE:

Compliance Department staff will use the guidance included in this policy as a framework with which to pattern their interactions with customers. The term "customers" includes all internal (employees) and external (everyone else) persons that we interact with in the course of conducting District business.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The intent of this policy is to establish guidance for providing excellent overall customer service, including specific examples that demonstrate what is expected.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

One mechanism with which to provide excellent customer service is through written communication. Customers who take the time to write a letter usually have given a great deal of thought to their concerns. It is the District's policy that all forms of written communication convey respect to the recipient, explain the situation, answer their questions and deliver the intended message in a positive format, even when the message may be unwelcome.

Examples of the types of communication we encourage are as follows:

- A. Thorough, thoughtful responses rather than blunt statements such as, “That’s our policy.”
- B. Explain the “why” in language that the recipient can understand, rather than just quoting lengthy, bureaucratic sections of rules, statutes, etc. Avoid saying “it’s our policy” without offering some explanation.
- C. Offer to assist them further whenever possible rather than referring them to another person, department, etc.
- D. Avoid being defensive, even when someone is being critical of District staff. Thank them for bringing things to our attention. Acknowledge our mistakes, if any.
- E. If we offer to get back to them it is imperative that we follow through.
- F. When we receive correspondence that asks a question or requests information/assistance, we always send a written response that fulfills their request.
- G. Do your best to offer options and alternatives.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

Another mechanism with which to provide excellent customer service is through verbal communication. As with written communication, it is the District’s policy that all forms of verbal communication convey respect to the recipient, explain the situation, answer their questions and deliver the intended message in a positive format, even when the message may be unwelcome.

Examples of the types of communication we encourage are as follows:

- A. Issuing Notices of Violation in Person. This gives you an opportunity to answer their questions as well as point out things they are doing right. This does not preclude the option of mailing NOVs in cases where the person who will receive it is not present or cannot be contacted, is located out of the area, etc.
- B. Ensure that you understand a question you are being asked before responding.
- C. Update your voice mail message(s) when you will be out of the office for an extended period. In this manner, customers aren’t left wondering why their call has not been returned.

- D. Check your voice mail messages frequently and return phone calls the same day whenever possible.
- E. Regularly ask your customers, “How can I help you, or, is there anything else I can do to assist you?”
- F. Try to find the answers to customer questions rather than referring them to someone else whenever possible.
- G. If you know that you may be late for an appointment, call ahead and let the customer know.
- H. Always get back to a customer when you have told them you will. We want our customers to know they can count on us.
- I. Avoid giving advice and/or direction unless you are certain the information being conveyed is accurate. If you are not certain, check with a Supervisor or Manager first and then get back to the customer.
- J. Keep scheduled appointments whenever possible. Exceptions are urgent matters that cannot be avoided. If this is not possible, reschedule appointments as much in advance as practicable.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION:

In all types of customer service contact, concern and helpfulness shall be demonstrated through actions as well as words. Our employees’ behavior and interaction with customers is a reflection of the District. Demeanor, attitude, degree of cooperation and professionalism are key to the impression you are making. Remember that non-verbal communication (body language) indicates our willingness, or lack thereof, to assist a customer. A customer’s impression/perception of the District may be formed solely on your interaction with them. Make it a productive, positive one.

FIELD INSPECTORS:

When performing an inspection, you are often making the first as well as a lasting impression of the District on the person you interact with. Upon arrival, present your business card and explain the purpose of your visit. Because your presence may be disruptive, proceed with tact and diplomacy. Be flexible. Demonstrate a willingness to educate them and help them understand our rules and processes. As stated above, honor scheduled appointments whenever possible.

INTERNAL CUSTOMER SERVICE:

All of the guidance provided in this policy is just as applicable to internal customers as it is to external customers. We are to convey respect to each other at all times, delivering whatever our message is in a positive manner. Concern and helpfulness need to be demonstrated through actions as well as words. We need to take as much care in answering each other's questions and requests for information/assistance as we do for our external customers and demonstrate the same level of cooperation and respect.

COMPLAINT RESPONSE

Complaints present a unique opportunity for us to demonstrate excellent customer service. When a customer takes the time to register a complaint, they do so because they have a concern and how we handle that concern is critical. In many instances, the only interaction a customer may ever have with the District is in relation to their complaint. Given that, it is extremely important to recognize our actions leave an impression of the District that they take away with them. Although we may not have a solution to their concern, it is a priority for the District that they have a positive experience with our agency.

There is a separate policy that identifies the specifics of responding to complaints, breakdowns and deviations, and you should refer to that policy for more details. The following items, however, are critical aspects that need to be incorporated into our response to complaints in order to ensure that we provide excellent customer service:

- A. Listen carefully to their concerns
- B. Ask them what their expectation from the process is
- C. Clarify for them what we can do
- D. Conduct an impartial investigation
- E. Thoroughly document your findings
- F. Follow-up with them to maximize their satisfaction
- G. Thank them for bringing the matter to our attention

Taking care to include these aspects into our complaint response procedures will help ensure our overall success.