

# *EDITORIAL PAGE*

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## **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Many of the inadequacies of environmental health programs and many of the misunderstandings regarding such programs have occurred due to the lack of positive and continuing public information activities. The goal of a sound public information activity should be to provide and keep open effective channels of communication between the official agency and its various audiences, including the general public, the public media, law makers, other governmental entities, and its own employees.

Public information as a management tool must be considered basic, necessary, and of the highest priority. All activities and records of any tax-supported agency should be open to public scrutiny unless specifically prohibited by law. Environmental Health programs should be viewed as products which must be continuously explained, interpreted, and sold both locally and even nationally at times. Each environmental practitioner should understand his role as a salesperson who must continuously explain his product in order that the public un-

derstands it. Or, in another way, we should visualize the public as our stockholders, and our various governing or legislative bodies as our corporate executive board. In this setting, we must continuously report to, explain to, and interpret to our stockholders and executive board. The purpose of an effective public information program, as a management tool, is to assure that the total public and key target groups, agencies, and officials, are kept informed concerning environmental health programs, achievements, and needs through various continuing and appropriate public information methodologies. The methodologies should involve such mechanisms as the printed news media, the electronic media, defining target groups, speakers bureaus, monthly and annual reports to the stock holders, and attractive and explanatory leaflets and brochures.

The effectiveness of environmental health programs can be enhanced by impartial, judicious release of information on routine measures. However, extreme care must be exercised to avoid com-

**promising the outcome of pending or likely legal cases. In all situations, information released for publication must be impartial and consistent with known, documented facts.**

**Effective public information activities are really an important component of the democratic process and a necessity for any tax-supported agency. The proper use of public information activities may play a key role in determining the success or failure of environmental health programs.**