

Building Chemical Safety Into Climate Resiliency Planning Grant Opportunity for Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies

The Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) provides Massachusetts businesses with free, non-regulatory, and confidential assistance with reducing their use of toxic chemicals, energy and water, and compliance with relevant environmental, health and safety regulations. Through a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), OTA is offering funding to as many as eight regional planning agencies (RPAs) to sponsor workshops designed to build awareness and educate city officials, community leaders, Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and businesses about the toxic chemicals stored, used and transported through their communities. The training will build models for incorporating toxics use reduction into community and regional emergency preparedness and climate resiliency planning.

The Issue:

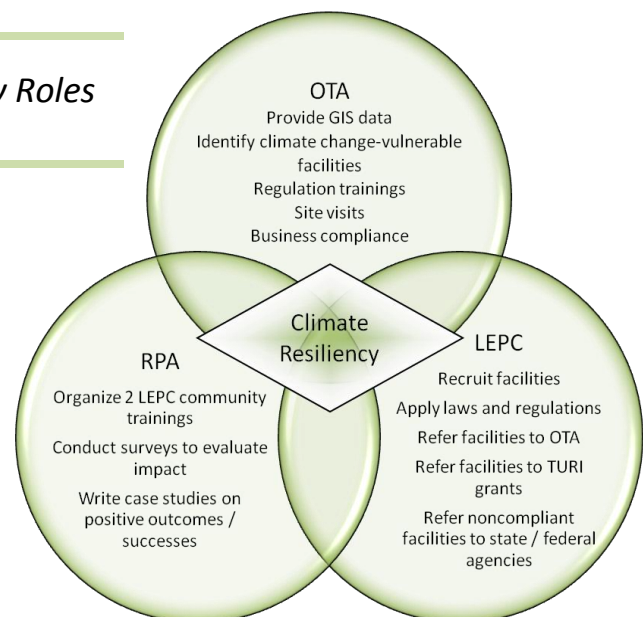
Climate change and extreme weather events have many obvious and visible negative public health consequences. These include increases in health emergencies such as heat-related illness and cardiovascular failure, asthma and respiratory illness, and water and vector-borne disease.

Heat waves, flooding, intense storms, power outages and other climate change events also pose a significant threat to communities where large toxic chemical users reside when critical infrastructure and services fail or are damaged. This program aims to prevent potential climate change related chemical disasters and bolster safer communities by educating community leaders about their vulnerabilities to chemicals within their vicinities, and by building toxics use reduction into local emergency preparedness and planning frameworks.

The Plan:

OTA will provide funding to up to eight RPAs to each hold two training events within their region. The first event will consist of a workshop to educate community leaders and stakeholders on the use of hazardous chemicals in their communities and the relevant regulatory requirements. The second event will introduce the assessment of vulnerabilities to climate change and the prevention of industrial accidents triggered by climate change by incorporating these issues in community and local emergency planning and at targeted facilities that use toxic chemicals. In addition to holding these events, RPAs must conduct surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the trainings and assist OTA in writing case studies on positive outcomes or successes.

Agency Roles



OTA will assist in locating and identifying climate change-vulnerable facilities and environmental justice communities. OTA staff and a consultant hired by OTA will provide expertise and information on relevant regulations and be an available resource for RPAs, LEPCs and participating facilities. OTA services are free and confidential and will be provided to participants upon request.

LEPCs will attend and participate in RPA-sponsored trainings and recruit climate change-vulnerable facilities to participate in workshops. LEPCs will strongly urge facilities to come into compliance with relevant regulations and encourage the use of OTA's free and confidential services. If enforcement action is absolutely necessary, LEPCs can choose to refer toxics users to appropriate state and federal regulatory agencies.

Chemical-using facilities will be asked to take actions to reduce their vulnerabilities to climate change disasters. Businesses will further benefit when toxics use reduction is incorporated into local emergency and climate change resiliency plans. Costs will decrease by reducing chemical purchases and hazardous waste disposal, businesses and toxics users will need fewer permits and regulatory reporting fees, non-compliance fines will be avoided, and liability will be reduced, which has potential to also reduce insurance costs. Resources for businesses include OTA's free and confidential services, the Toxics Use Reduction Institute's (TURI) small business and industry toxics use reduction incentive grants, and other resources.

Benefits and Measurements:

Timelines, reporting needs and deliverables will be further defined in OTA's Request for Proposals. The goal of this program is to create a sustainable regional planning model that will benefit RPAs by reducing chemical accidents and exposures. When RPAs accept funding from this grant, they will commit to a measurement effort. RPAs must generate information through surveys with facility workshop participants. The grant specifically requires quantification of:

- Changes in practices and / or behavior
- Emergency plans that include toxics use reduction
- Toxics Use / Hazardous Waste / Air Pollution Reduction
- Electricity / Energy / Water Conservation
- Economic Savings

Grant Funding Priorities:

OTA will provide details on the timeline and budget information in the Request for Proposals. The grant prioritizes:

- Environmental justice communities
- Geographic locations subject to extreme weather events, such as flooding
- Proposals that present ways of measuring toxics use reduction and improvements in community resiliency
- Strong coalitions with community leaders and stakeholders
- Industry participation in LEPCs
- Strong LEPC and community commitment

Interested parties should contact Tiffany Skogstrom, OTA Environmental Analyst, at 617-626-1086 or tiffany.skogstrom@state.ma.us