

EPA PRESS RELEASE
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**COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH BUSINESSES
WILL REWARD HIGHER ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today elevated its efforts to work with businesses which have achieved a higher environmental performance level beyond legal compliance requirements. Under the National Environmental Performance Track program, the agency will reward companies which exceed minimum regulatory requirements and take extra steps to reduce and prevent pollution. These companies are setting the pace in demonstrating ways to increase protection of public health and the environment.

"Businesses that participate in the National Environmental Performance Track program are going beyond compliance to better protect public health and the environment," said EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner. "The Performance Track opportunity will be offered to companies which have demonstrated true leadership and deserve the benefits. We're highlighting such companies as models of a higher level of environmental achievement."

The Performance Track is intended for top performing facilities and companies with a proven record of regulatory compliance, an operational Environmental Management System, and a demonstrated commitment to continued improvement and outreach to the local community and the public.

Performance will be defined for two levels. The National Environmental Achievement track rewards companies that have a strong compliance record and have raised the bar by setting up an Environmental Management System, voluntarily reducing pollution and making commitments to further environmental improvement. The other tier, the National Environmental Stewardship track, which is still being developed, will encourage moving the bar even higher with a corporate commitment for stronger environmental improvement throughout its operations.

The Performance Track program is a culmination of innovative EPA pilots such as Project XL. It builds on existing partnership efforts which have produced environmental and economic dividends. Through the Common Sense Initiative, the Environmental Leadership Program, Star Track and similar programs, many companies have achieved exceptional environmental and economic dividends and improved relations with customers and stakeholders.

Benefits for participants include national recognition, regulatory and administrative flexibility, a more cooperative relationship with EPA, a reduction in both record keeping and reporting requirements, and flexibility in meeting certain regulatory requirements.

There are two deadlines for application, Sept. 1 for charter applicants who will be notified in November and Sept. 30 for notification in December. A notice of requirements will be published in the Federal Register. More information is available at <http://www.epa.gov/performance-track>. E-mail inquiries can be directed to: prack@indecon.com.