

# Toxics Reduction Strategy: Government and Community Partnership



**Plenary Session: Precaution in Action**  
**June 9, 2006**

Molly Chidsey, Pollution Prevention Specialist  
Multnomah County

Neha Patel, Program Director  
Oregon Center for Environmental Health

# We met through...

- The Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Healthcare



# It all started with...

## Sustainability Forum- May 2003

- We were asked to participate on a planning committee to organize a health and environment workshop for the event.
- Participants and speakers identified a need for a local plan on toxics.

## Sustainable Development Commission of Portland and Multnomah County -June 2003

- Presented a proposal to use a “precautionary approach” to develop toxics strategy using for local government operations to the citizen’s advisory board tasked with making recommendations to the city and county on how they can be more sustainable.

# How are we going to do this?

## Bring in the Experts!

Workshop on the Precautionary Principle- April 2004

- Hosted workshop on toxics and precaution in Portland in collaboration with:
  - Be Safe Network
  - Science and Environmental Health Network
  - San Francisco Department of the Environment
- Over 130 attendees from local government, environmental groups, academia, and the community
- The workshop was successful in initiating a dialogue locally about prevention of toxic pollution and protection of human health.

# Now What?

- May 2004: Meet with City of Portland Office of Sustainable Development to gain their support
- Summer 2004: Convened Workgroup to provide input for a resolution and report on toxics reduction at the local level in Portland/ Multnomah County
- September 2004: Released white paper “Precautionary Approaches for Health and the Environment” and city and county adopted initial resolution to develop joint Toxics Reduction Strategy

# Developing the Strategy

- May 2005- Appointed members for a public workgroup to develop the strategy.
- Molly and Neha serve as workgroup co-chairs

Over next 10 months, the workgroup

- Identified local toxic concerns based on prior assessments
- Interviewed City and County bureau and department stakeholders
- Documented current chemical inventory procedures
- Reviewed best practices in toxics reduction

# What do people think?

- Collected stakeholder feedback on draft
  - City bureau and county department briefings
  - One-on one meetings with key departments and bureaus
  - Two week public comment period;
  - Sustainable Development Commission open public meeting

# They Like It!

(or at least most do)

- Multnomah County Board and City Council of Portland adopt Toxics Reduction Strategy Using the Precautionary Principle Unanimously!



# Now for the Hard Part...Implementation

- 40 proposed short and mid-term actions have been identified and a process to carry out the action using tenets of the Precautionary Principle has been drafted
  - Next Steps
    - Formation of Steering Committee
    - Finalize Implementation process for Strategy
    - Focus on initial proposed actions including comprehensive purchasing policy using the precautionary principle.

# Lessons Learned and Getting Started in Your Community

- Government Employees DO Care!
- Form Partnerships and Tap into Resources in Community (citizen advisory groups, existing coalitions)
- It is OK to be a copy cat. ( **THANKS** San Francisco and Seattle!)
- Once you think you have enough stakeholder feedback, go get some more!
- If at first it doesn't work, try again!