

# Communicating With Non-Farm Neighbors



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# Communicating with Non-Farm Neighbors

## *Thank You to:*

Gregg Langer – Landmark Services Cooperative, Cottage Grove, WI

Tim Sanders – The DeLong Company, Inc., Clinton, WI

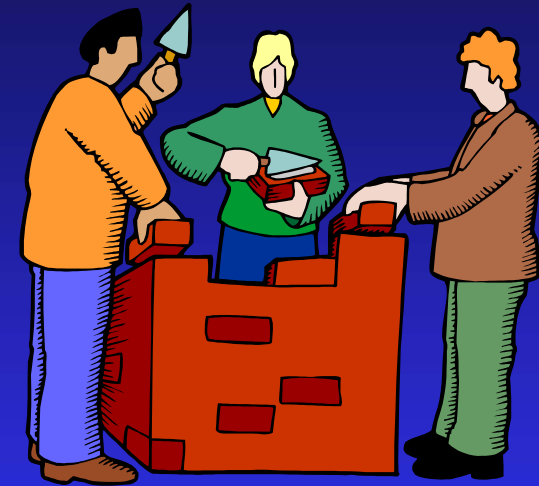
Al Zirk & Jerry Breitsprecher – UAP, DeForest, WI

Dick Stiltz – Cooperative Plus Inc., Union Grove, WI

Liz O'Donnell and Mark McCloskey – WDATCP, Madison, WI

# Building Positive Neighbor Relations

1. Talk with and get to know your neighbors.
2. Be a good neighbor yourself.
3. Just use common sense.
4. Timing is everything.
5. Comply with all regulations.
6. Keep your business clean and attractive.
7. Invite neighbors to see what you do.
8. Establish an internal complaint system.
9. You won't solve anything being hard-nosed or arrogant.
10. Be active in your community.



Adapted from:  
"Building positive neighbor relations"  
Ohio Livestock Environmental  
Assurance Program

# Building Positive Neighbor Relations

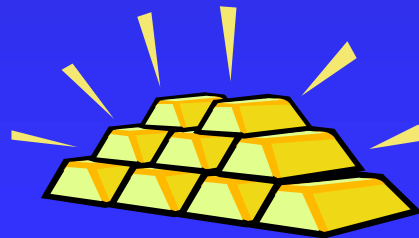


**It's all about tomatoes!**

# Talk with and get to know your neighbors

## This is Rule #1.

- If you know your neighbors it is much easier to talk with them about problems that may arise.
  - *Builds trust.*
  - *Minimizes conflicts.*
  - *It will keep problems from escalating.*



# Talk with and get to know your neighbors

## Action Items

- Establish “Open Door” policy.
- Make your communications a “two-way street”.
- Make the first move:
  - *Personal contact.*
  - *Company newsletters or flyers.*
- *Educate them about benefits of agriculture*
  - *UWEX – County Information*
  - *Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation*



**Dane County Agriculture: Value and economic impact**

**How important is agriculture to the county's economy?**

- Agriculture provides jobs for 23,726 Dane County residents.
- Agriculture accounts for \$3.9 billion in economic activity.
- Agriculture contributes \$1.1 billion to the county's total income.
- Agriculture pays \$102.8 million in taxes. This figure does not include all property taxes paid to local schools.

**Who owns the farms?**

- Individuals or families—85.6%
- Family partnerships—9.9%
- Family-owned cooperatives—2.3%
- Non-family corporations—1.4%

**Located in the heart of southern Wisconsin, Dane County is among the most productive agricultural counties in the state. It ranks consistently in the top five for corn and soybean grain production, corn silage production, total milk production and number of dairy cows. In**

**A**griculture is an important economic base in Dane County. It includes hundreds of family-owned farms, related businesses and industries that provide equipment, services and other products farmers need to produce, market and deliver food and fiber to consumers. The production, sales and processing of Dane County's farm products generates employment, economic activity, income and tax revenue.

# Be a good neighbor yourself

## Action Items

- Identify “sensitive areas” prior to season and mark these on field maps.
  - *New houses*
  - *Gardens/grapes/apple trees*
  - *Dog kennels*
  - *Pools*
  - *Playgrounds*
- Talk with your grower.
  - *Other crops nearby*
- Communicate to all people – sales > applicators.
- Clearly mark all vehicles/sprayers with company name – nothing to hide.



# Reasoning Exercise #1



While spraying a soybean field next to a subdivision, your applicator notices a man standing out in his backyard, videotaping the application. Your applicator should:

1. *Ignore him and keep on working.*
2. *Stop and introduce himself to the man.*
3. *Call into the office for advice on what to do.*





# Reasoning Exercise #1

- **Stop and introduce himself to the man.**
  - *Address concern immediately*
  - *Provide business card*
  - *Number and person to call for more information*



**Just use common sense**  
**+**  
**Timing is everything**  
**+**  
**Comply with all regulations**



# Strategies to avoid concerns

## Action Items

- Pre-plan with grower & staff:
  - *Sensitive areas*
  - *Adjacent crops*
  - *Other potential problems (neighbor disputes)*
- Consider which products are to be used:
  - *Odor issues?*
  - *Off site movement/trouble potential/risks?*
    - *Growth regulators (2,4-D, dicamba)*
    - *Prowl EC*
    - *Lumax/Callisto*
    - *Gramoxone*
    - *Glyphosate*
    - *Insecticides*



# Strategies to avoid concerns

## Action Items

- Equipment is set-up to manage droplet size and drift:
  - *Nozzles*
  - *Pressure*
  - *Speed*
  - *Water volume*
  - *Boom height*
  - *Use a deposition aid/drift retardant*
- Use a wind meter in the field.
- Consider leaving buffer strips.



# Strategies to avoid concerns

## Action Items

- Spray or not to spray?
  - *Communication from field to plant*
  - *Conditions in particular field*
  - *Wind direction/speed*
  - *Potential risks vs. benefits*
  - *Applicator makes final call*
- Follow the label!
- Make sure all spray records are properly filled out.
- Communicate to all people – sales > applicators.
- Come back another day if conditions aren't conducive for spraying.



# Strategies to avoid concerns

## Action Items

- Pre-notify concerned neighbors:
  - *Call before spraying field*
  - *Put phone number on field map and highlight*
- Spray during work day.
- Don't spray on week-ends or special event days.
  - *Graduations/family reunions.*
- Cover-up the garden.
- Avoid mixing & loading in sensitive areas.
- Pick up any pesticide containers.



## Reasoning Exercise #2



Two days after spraying a corn field next to a subdivision, you receive a call from a women who claims you have injured her prize tomato patch.

You go out that next day to investigate and see that in fact the garden has been injured from the application. You should say or do the following:

1. *What did you expect living next to a corn field?*
2. *Listen, finish your investigation and ask her what you can do to make things right.*
3. *Minimize the problem and offer her \$20 for the tomatoes.*

# Reasoning Exercise #2

1. Listen to concern.
2. Ask questions.
3. Gather information.
4. Address concerns.
5. Take time to educate.
6. Discuss what you can do to make things right.
7. Do it.





# Keep your business clean and attractive

- First impressions are everything!
- How does your plant and equipment look?
  - *If trashy/rundown – neighbors will judge by your appearance.*
  - *If place is messy = bad management.*
- Keep equipment clean and well marked.
  - Flashers/lights working.



# Invite neighbors to see what you do

## Action Items

- Summer BBQ.
- Open house.
- Offer a personal tour of your facility.
- Make opportunities to explain how you operate your business.
- Show them the things you do to safeguard people and the environment.



# Reasoning Exercise #3



True or false – 83.3% of people reporting problems are anti-pesticide.



# Reasoning Exercise #3

False

People just want to know what is going on and have a choice in what is happening.

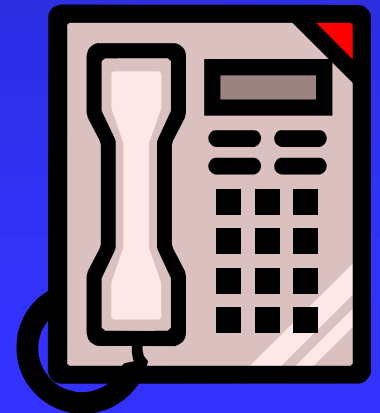


Key Point – don't make assumptions

# Establish an internal complaint system

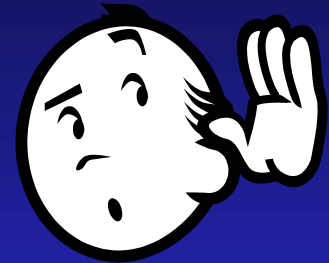
## Action Items

- Encourage people to contact you first.
- Decide who should take the calls & concerns.
- Use complaint form to track information.
- Address quickly.



# You won't solve anything being hard nosed or arrogant

- Listen to the concerns.
- Ask questions.
- Don't pre-judge or minimize concerns.
- Respect the person you are talking with.
- Think before you speak, especially if tired.
- If follow up is needed, be prompt/timely.
- When mistakes happen, take responsibility and appropriate corrective actions.



# Comments to consider when addressing concerns

- “We live in the same neighborhood too.”
  - *Our kids drink the same water*
  - *We breathe the same air*
- “We are professionals – take pride in doing things right.”
- “We look over each situation and strive to do the right things each time.”
- “We are aware of the sensitive areas.”
- “The grower makes his living off this land. He cares about it as well.”
- **Attitude and tone of voice critical!**



# Be active in your local community

- Sponsor college scholarships.
- Sponsor local fund raisers:
  - Volunteer Fire Department breakfasts
- Sponsor local athletic teams.





# How we did it right!

*The DeLong Co., Clinton, WI - 2005*

Call comes in claiming that shrubs were dying in commercial nursery in field adjacent to corn field that was sprayed by The DeLong Co.



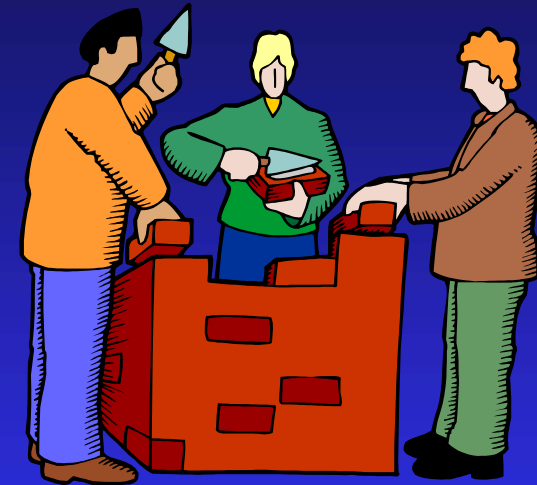
# How we did it right!

1. Responded quickly.
2. We listened, did not minimize concern.
3. Thoroughly investigated the situation.
4. Found the real cause.
5. Backed it up with analytical tests.
6. Followed up and communicated the results.



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