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Defense Date: April 16, 2009

Title: Institutional Pressures Affecting A Firm's Decision To Visit EPA Compliance Assistance Websites To Comply With Environmental Regulations: A Study Of The Organic Chemical Industry

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation employs concepts of institutional theory from the organizational sociology literature and incorporates data from US Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPAs) databases and the organic chemical industry to examine institutional forces responsible for motivating firms to visit USEPA Compliance Assistance websites to comply with regulations. A sample of 546 facilities was examined and stakeholders were surveyed using both online and phone questionnaires. Data was analyzed using chisquare and logistic regression tests.

Much of the current literature on Compliance and Enforcement has identified government pressure as the driving force for enticing firms to comply with regulations. To comply with regulations firms often seek compliance assistance from government websites. There is little research, however, on whether additional forces external to the firm, emanating from the community and trade association, can be predictors of the firm's likelihood to visit USEPA Compliance Assistance websites and thus, comply with regulations.

This research has been framed around two hypotheses and five research questions that collectively explore whether firms are likely to visit USEPA Compliance Assistance websites to comply with regulations as a result of government, community, and trade association pressures. Three sets of findings emerge from this research. First, government inspections, not sanctions, predict whether the firm visits USEPA Compliance Assistance websites to comply with regulations. A second finding suggests that pressure from the local community does not predict whether the firm visits USEPA Compliance Assistance websites. Lastly, a third finding suggests that pressure from the trade association does not predict whether the firm visits USEPA Compliance Assistance websites.

Findings from this study are tentative and exploratory not definitive and contribute to the social science literature by suggesting that government inspections are a major factor in predicting whether the firm will likely visit USEPA Compliance Assistance websites to comply with regulations. Finally, findings from this study can assist government officials understand how best to improve their compliance assistance websites to ensure that firms can find relevant regulatory information. Facility managers can gain an understanding of external pressures affecting their decision to seek USEPA compliance assistance. Such understanding will help them identify where their resource allocation with respect to environmental compliance and stakeholder involvement will be most effective.