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BENEFITS OF BEING ISO-CERTIFIED

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We at the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office have seen numerous benefits since adopting ISO as our operations protocol. Benefits from improved efficiency and cost savings to a safer work environment are all by-products of ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

Currently, OCDC is certified to the ISO 9000 standard. We are in the process of becoming ISO 14000 certified. The ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families are among ISO's most widely known and successful standards ever. ISO 9000 has become an international reference for quality requirements in business to business dealings, and ISO 14000 looks to achieve at least as much, if not more, in helping organizations to meet their environmental challenges.

The vast majority of ISO standards are highly specific to a particular product, material, or process. However, the standards that have earned the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families a worldwide reputation are known as generic management system standards. That means that the same standards can be applied to any organization, large or small, whatever its product - including whether its product is actually a service - in any sector of activity, and whether it is a business enterprise, a public administration, or as in our case, a governmental agency.

Since our focus is on protecting the environment and preserving our natural resources, gearing up for ISO 14000 seemed like a logical extension of what we do. To accomplish our goals, we've established a training format for new and existing employees. Following ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 protocols means that our forms are standardized, our work methods and procedures are designed to ensure consistency throughout our organization with an eye toward maintaining high quality service to our customers.

ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 standardizes forms, work methods and procedures to ensure a consistently high result in all that we do. Adherence to ISO tenants also allows us to establish measurables for maintaining work performance standards. We're always striving for improvement and ISO gives us a clear picture of where we've been and where we're going. Our dedication to continuous improvements translates into real, tangible benefits for our customers such as a greater number of residential cross connection inspections per day or more feet of sewer cleaned each day.

We don't stop there. ISO standards also allow us to keep the customer in mind by providing methods to monitor and measure our customer service. At the same time, it

provides a systematic, ongoing review of internal and external standards to make sure we're remaining up-to-date and compliant with industry standards and regulations.

In short, it gives us a clearer picture and allows us to keep closer tabs on the day-to-day operation with respect to such things as equipment maintenance schedules, procedures and frequencies. It also formalizes ongoing calibration and testing for our measuring devices such as meters and pressure gauges.

ISO standards make an enormous contribution to our operation. As with many standards, the contribution often is invisible. It is when there is an absence of standards that their importance is brought home. For example, as purchasers or users of products, we soon notice when they turn out to be of poor quality, do not fit, are incompatible with equipment we already have, are unreliable or dangerous. When products meet our expectations, we tend to take this for granted.

More than half a million organizations in more 60 countries are implementing ISO 9000 which provides a framework for quality management throughout the processes of producing and delivering products and services for the customer. We're particularly proud of the fact that OCDC is the first facility of its kind to be ISO certified in the United States.

While we've prided ourselves in being environmentally sensitive, we're convinced that the ISO 14000 environmental management system is going to help us improve on our success in the environmental arena while, at the same time, making a positive impact on helping our customers as well.