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## BTEC MEMBER GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL FACILITY TOURS DURING NATIONAL BIOENERGY DAY

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Thank you for your consideration of participating in the 2014 National Bioenergy Day. This “Tour Guide” will help you to plan a successful tour on NBD by addressing the key requirements needed to create a positive experience for your visitors and your staff.

BTEC would like to thank Pellet Fuels Institute (PFI) and the Biomass Power Association (BPA) for their support in developing these materials.

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### PLANNING A PUBLIC TOUR

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The following guidelines will help you plan a successful facility tour:

#### **Determine your audience for the visit**

National Bioenergy Day is a great opportunity for your facility to open its doors to the public and raise awareness about your contribution to the health and wealth of the community, and the products that are made locally.

#### **Set achievable objectives**

Decide what outcomes you would like to reach and thus what you would like to feature and how best to link the issues visually with your facility operations. Prepare your staff well for critical questions and know how to respond to them. BTEC is developing a “Myths” document, which addresses many misperceptions of our industry. Make sure your guides and team practice to give the responses without sounding too stiff.

### **Determine the type of event**

Decide what type of event makes sense given your budget and staff resources. Examples of successful events have included pellet-fired BBQs, small facility tours, lobster boils, staff appreciation days and school group visits. Other ideas to consider: having your CEO or other executive present to address visitors; inviting the mayor or other local dignitary to say a few words; providing refreshments, handouts (provided by NBD organizers), giveaways.

### **Lay out “bait”**

Offer food and drinks (BBQ, sandwiches, lemonades) and announce that in your communications. It’s a sure way for the public to take interest and make the way out to your facility if they know they’ll be fed.

### **Issue announcements in local media**

Newspaper ads, articles or even public radio ads are known tools to generate interest and increase attendance. Ramp up your communications efforts on social media in preparation of the event and feature the activities you’re planning.

### **Invite community leaders**

Community leaders need to know about the impact you’re having on the community, the jobs you’re creating and the good work that’s done at the facility.

### **Inform and brief all employees**

Once the tour is confirmed, promote it throughout the company by distributing a summary of the event activities and information about your company. Invite your employees’ friends and families to see their place of work.

### **Consider arranging transportation for special audiences**

Consider working with nursing homes, hospitals and other commercial buildings occupants who are potential customers of your products to tour your facility. You may want to pay for or coordinate transportation for to meet the unique needs of these audiences.

### **Lay out information on your company**

Provide materials on tables or in grab bags at the entrance and exit area which include the total number of employees, the products your company manufactures, its project portfolio, and the amount of sales.

### **Pick a capable tour guide**

The guide should have experience, be articulate and knowledgeable about facility operations as well as issues that concern the company, and know everyone the public is likely to meet by name.

### **Develop and publicize your tour program**

A tour schedule will help visitors to plan for events they are most interested and include a route and site map.

### **Practice the tour and test safety equipment before the event**

If time allows, do a test tour a week ahead of time to allow for changes in the program, and a test a day ahead to make sure all parts of the tour have been considered. It may be helpful for participants to answer possible questions to prepare for issues the public may raise.

Make sure to test key equipment and safety gear for functionality to ensure that equipment is operating to provide action interest. Provide safety gear to all participants when necessary.

### **Arrange for social media coverage**

See if you can cover the day on social media with frequent tweets, live updates, photos and videos to spread the word about the event throughout the day. Consider scheduling tweets for the day in advance that feature your program for the day.

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## **SITE TOUR FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

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Your company's facilities or its installations are an effective way for grassroots participants to build relationships with state and federal public officials. Tours illustrate firsthand how facility processes relate to policy issues (of which there are many!) and are an excellent tool for grassroots advocacy. October 22<sup>nd</sup> is a few weeks before midterm elections, which means your federal legislators are likely to be in their district offices, and that is an especially good time to schedule a site tour. These tours differ significantly from public tours:

### **Coordinate with BTEC and the Policy Committee the objectives for the visit**

BTEC and our Policy Committee may help you to refine the issues you want to discuss and how best to link them with facility operations. This may also help to determine if the legislators have particular interests (i.e. energy, agriculture, forestry, and economic development).

### **Send a written invitation**

Include the value that legislators can get out of this visit, especially considering the proximity to the mid-term election. The Appendix features a template for an invitation letter. Contact BTEC for details on who to best approach at the legislator's office.

### **Publicize the tour to all employees, coordinate details with legislator's press aides**

Once the tour is confirmed, promote it throughout the company by distributing a brief biography of the legislator and information about the legislator's importance. Similarly, provide the legislator with information on your company prior to the visit, for example, include the total number of employees, the products your company manufactures, and the amount of sales and contributions to the community.

Work closely with the legislator's press aide on publicity and news coverage. A media advisory is included in the Appendix. Determine good locations in the facility where to take photos. Consider lighting and background imagery for best results.

You may want to pay for or coordinate transportation to your facility for the legislator. (Check with your company's government relations or legal staff to see if there are any policy, legal, and or ethics restrictions.)

### **Invite your company's government relations staff to participate in the tour**

You may also want to consider inviting a few top community leaders and industry association executives. Be careful, however, to avoid a large tour group. Make sure they are briefed about the purpose of the visit and distribute talking points to stay on message. A planning call with these participants may be wise.

### **Develop a tour schedule**

Create a route that illustrates the objectives you set for the visit and share it with the legislator's staff. Know when the public official has to leave, and allow for extra time if he or she wants to remain longer in one location. Create a contact sheet with roles & responsibility and a timeline for key personnel, including phone numbers. Everyone needs to be able to contact everyone else in an emergency or change of plans.

### **Pick a capable tour guide, rehearse the tour the day before and prepare key equipment and safety gear ahead of time**

The guide should be articulate and knowledgeable about site operations, as well as issues that concern the company, and know by name everyone the legislator is likely to meet. The guide must be prepared to answer possible questions and address issues the public official might raise. Ensure that equipment is operating to provide action interest. Provide safety gear to all participants when necessary.

### **After the tour, send a thank you note to the official**

Always thank the public official in writing. Reiterate the points discussed on the visit. Forward pictures taken during the tour for the official to use in his or her own newsletters and other communications

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## EXECUTING YOUR TOUR

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A facility tour is an appropriate and useful way to educate your audience and help increase the 'comfort index' of grassroots participants. While a tour may be a familiar activity, the following tips will assist you in conducting a tour to meet your objectives.

Consider starting the visit in a quiet area which overlooks the facility, or your office, and make stops in quiet areas along the way to talk.

Provide your audience with an overview of important facts about your company's facilities, including number of employees and amount of payroll, taxes, and local expenditures for materials and services, environmental and energy problems and outlays, standards and advances in health and safety, and new products and equipment. However, avoid boring your audience with too much technical or economic data than an interested layperson can absorb. Intersperse your tour with anecdotes and little-known facts about the industry, the facility, impacts on the community, or related subjects.

Be sure the tour guide is able to address hard questions from your audience. Review and practice your responses to common myths. Provide insightful or witty answers, and refrain from sounding too technical. Testing what the audience has learned during the tour may be a good idea to start a

discussion at the end and provides an opportunity to answer the public's questions and reemphasize key messages in detail.

Remember, employees are members of the community and the faces of your company, so be sure to introduce your employees.

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## EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

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### Consider creating special events at your site

Although you don't have to, it may be a good idea to tie your tour to a special event:

- Groundbreaking for new or expanded facilities
- Scholarship presentations
- Professional award ceremonies
- Employee of the Year Award
- Launching of local civic or health care initiative
- 100 year old birthday celebration
- Inauguration of new services for residents or community
- Collaborate with regional wineries/microbreweries to host a tasting (may require permits)
- Offer insights in internships, training programs, jobs, or recruitment policies

Consider special activities for kids, including:

- School Class activities (educational tours with instructors, e.g. on local renewable energy)
- Employee baking competition/cookie tasting
- Scavenger hunt
- Mystery Bag Activity/Mystery Bag Guessing Game
- Listening Walks
- Any sort of forestry, agricultural, energy related fun lessons
- Allow kids to use pellets creatively (under supervision) and e.g. make pellet animals, houses or other stuff with pellets and glue ([http://www.hero-hessen.de/wai1/showcontent.asp?ThemaID=1023#../gallery/gal\\_21/DSCN3055.JPG](http://www.hero-hessen.de/wai1/showcontent.asp?ThemaID=1023#../gallery/gal_21/DSCN3055.JPG))

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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You may find additional inspiration for your tour by reviewing these documents or researching activities on the web. Of course, you want to create activities around the theme of your facility:

- <http://www.ahcancal.org/advocacy/Documents/HowToGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.energykids.eu/fun-games-classic-in-parks>
- <http://safesitter.org/students-and-parents/babysitting-activities/school-age.aspx>

## SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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[Date]

Honorable \_\_\_\_\_

Title

District Address

Dear Representative/Senator/Mayor:

I would like to extend an invitation for you to join a tour of [insert company name and location or site]. The tour is part of a national day of recognition for companies, institutions, and communities using locally produced bioenergy for provide heat, power, and jobs.

*[Insert information describing your company 2-3 sentences. Include the number of employees.]*

The format usually calls for the tour, open discussion with our employees (including a question and comment period) and then a photo opportunity. We expect the entire event to take no more than *[time limit]* minutes. Let me suggest National Bioenergy Day, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.

This tour is an opportunity for you to see our operation, speak openly with end users, and see first hand how bioenergy for heat and power promotes rural economic activity, energy independence, and healthier forests. We sincerely hope that you will be able to accept our invitation to participate. I will call your office regarding the details of this event. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[TITLE]

## SAMPLE PRESS ADVISORY – SITE TOUR FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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NEWS ALERT

[Insert company logo]

[Alert Number]

NEWS CONTACTS:

[Company Contact] (000) 555-5555-[extension]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Advisory

[NAME OF COMPANY] TO HOST [NAME OF LAWMAKER]

[DATE]

**When:** [Name of company and city, state] will host [name of official] for a facility tour tomorrow morning as part of the second annual National Bioenergy Day, a nationwide day of advocacy for all kinds of heat and power generated by woody biomass and agricultural waste, from large-scale utilities to home heating stoves.

The [insert public official] will observe the site's [give a brief description of what the official will see while on the tour] and offer brief remarks to gathering employees.

[Company name] is a member company of [trade association, insert blurb on association's mission].

**Who:** [Name of lawmaker]

[Company name]

**Where:** [Company name]

[Facility address]

[City, State, Zip]

**When:** [Date and time]

[Insert company address and Web site, if applicable]

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