

**Communication Plan for Public Health Activities Conducted Under the
Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
and
The Department of Energy (DOE)**

Introduction/Purpose

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), and the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), direct and conduct public health activities to assess the potential impact of DOE activities on the health of current and former workers, and community residents living near DOE facilities. These public health activities are conducted under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DHHS and DOE. Within DOE, EH-6 is responsible for these public health activities.

The MOU specifies (§5.a, ¶7) that DOE and CDC/ATSDR will communicate information about studies and public health activities performed under the MOU based on a joint communication plan developed by these agencies. This plan establishes the general values, expectations, and goals of effective communications of the health activities conducted under the MOU.

Core Communication Values

The following core values are essential to effective communication of health studies and public health activities:

- Openness and accountability for all communications
- Accuracy, timeliness, and clarity of communications
- Application of the highest scientific standards and practices
- Agency communication of project/study results will be independent and may be provided in addition to researcher's report of findings
- Early and continual communications to study participants through the life of a project/study
- Effective interagency communication is essential to the success of the program
- Evaluation is an essential tool in continual communication improvement

Specific Communication Guidance

The following communication aspects of planning, conducting, and completing health activities conducted under the MOU are central to an effective communication strategy.

A. Communication During the Planning Stages

1. As specified in the MOU (§6), the site-specific agenda for public health activities at DOE sites, with stakeholder input, will be expanded into a 5-year plan and will be updated annually. Through dissemination of this agenda, the agencies will keep respective stakeholders informed of, and solicit input about, planned activities.
2. CDC and ATSDR will have sole responsibility for the selection, design, and conduct, of research and public health activities conducted by the respective agencies, their contractors, grantees, or cooperative agreement holders under this MOU.

B. Communication During the Initiation and the Conduct of Activities

1. Notification of new projects or research efforts will be shared in a timely fashion with those impacted (each agency will act in accordance with a project/study-specific designed communication plan as appropriate for a given agency and activity).
2. Each project/study will utilize specific design and methodological approaches that maximize scientific strengths and minimize scientific limitations. Communications about a project/study will address the strengths and limitations of that particular effort.
3. Communications of health-related research will promote awareness that human subjects are both protected and informed.
4. Populations being studied will be apprized of progress on each project/study as appropriate and specified per agency's derived project/study-specific communication plan (primary responsibility of agency conducting or sponsoring the work).
5. Representatives of populations being studied will be included in the review of studies or public health activities being conducted under this MOU.

C. Communication of the Final Results

1. CDC and ATSDR will have sole responsibility for the analysis and scientific interpretation of research and public health activities conducted by the respective agencies, their contractors, grantees, or cooperative agreement holders under this MOU.
2. Public educational materials should be adapted or modified only in consultation with the agency conducting the study.
3. Communication of study findings will be balanced and scientifically sound.

4. Communication about health studies should place findings within a broad public health context and be presented in a style which promotes audience understanding.
5. Any recommendations for public health actions that are deemed appropriate by CDC or ATSDR, as a result of the significant findings identified by a study, should be addressed without undue delay.
6. To ensure research data regarding DOE sites are available to the larger scientific community, the sponsoring agency will make research data and documentation available through DOE's public-use database, CEDR. For reports routinely available through ATSDR's website, the Internet address will be provided to CEDR to link the two websites.
7. Communication of study findings will, to the extent possible, be sensitive to interdepartmental information needs.