



Secretariat of Environment,
Natural Resources, and
Fishing

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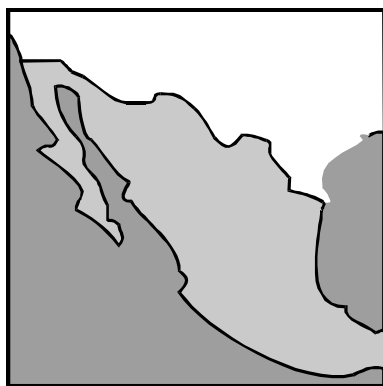
Report from the Workgroup on Contingency Planning and Emergency Response to the National Coordinators

March 19, 1998



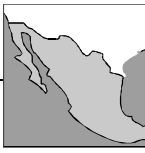
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On March 18, 1998, the Workgroup on Contingency Planning and Emergency Response met during the National Coordinators' Meeting (NCM) in San Diego, California. The Workgroup discussed the accomplishments of the Workgroup since the last NCM and the goals for the present year.

I. STATUS OF WORKPLAN ACTIVITIES

Technical Assistance Workshops for Sister Cities. The first of the technical assistance workshops for sister cities will be held in San Diego on March 20, 1998, and will include representatives from the San Diego/Tecate-Tijuana and Mexicali/Calexico. The second meeting will be held with the sister cities along the border of the states of Arizona and Sonora and will include training on CAMEO both the English and Spanish version. Additionally, during the months of May and June, training sessions which focus on prevention of chemical accidents will be held with in five (5) Sister Cities. Later in 1998, two sister city plans will be exercised to determine needed changes in improving the plan.

Inventory of Resources for Emergency Attention in Mexican Sister Cities. Inventories have been developed for sister cities in the states of Baja California and Chihuahua as well as for the States of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. This information completes the total Mexican border area. These inventories will be incorporated into a computerized system.

Training and Translation of CAMEO. The translation of CAMEO into Spanish has been completed and was demonstrated at the Workgroup meeting. A beta test of the system will take place over the next several months. Following this test, the Spanish version will be distributed to the Sister Cities along the border and training in the input of data and use of the system will be provided to the those Sister Cities throughout the remainder of 1998. The system was demonstrated and was highlighted as a useful tool in planning or response, specifically as a tool to manage chemical information from fixed facilities.

Completion of the JCP. The final version of the JCP has been reviewed and approved by the U.S./Mexico Joint Response Team. This final version of the JCP has been signed by Julia Carabias the Secretary of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fishing in Mexico and is in the signing process within the United States. The U.S. and Mexico will exchange diplomatic notes to replace the 1988 version of the JCP with this final version of the JCP and to accept this JCP as legally binding agreement between the two countries.

Exercise the Joint Contingency Plan. An exercise of the notification procedures between federal levels of the governments was held in Nuevo Laredo/Laredo in November 1997. Lessons were learned from this exercises which will be incorporated into the implementation of future exercises. A schedule for the three remaining exercises will be established in March 1998 and the exercises will be held prior to the end of 1998.

Discussion on this topic raised issues relating to communication and notification. It was noted that the JRT needs to continuously test the bi-national notification systems at all levels.

Follow-up on Recommendations of the Transboundary Mobilization of Personnel and Equipment Workgroup. In 1997, the JRT reviewed and developed steps to implement several of the recommendations from the Workgroup. To date, the JRT has established a webpage for border activities, developed a semi-annual report on U.S./Mexico accomplishments and upcoming activities, gathered all existing emergency response laws, treaties, and agreements to be put on the webpage, and included an overview of the roles and responsibilities for each U.S. and Mexican agencies in the JCP. Additionally, the JRT will work to involve industry, customs, and immigration representatives in Federal, state, and local contingency planning and develop outreach strategies for JRT activities and products.



II. FUTURE GOALS FOR THE WORKGROUP

Following the overview of the accomplishments of the Workgroup over the last year, Workgroup members discussed additional issues of interest. Important issues which the workgroup recommended be further addressed are:

- Improvement communication within the workgroup on scheduling of events, lessons learned from exercises, and contingency planning efforts.
- Better linkage to other workgroups on cross-cutting issues.
- Inclusion of cross-border transportation issues in contingency planning whenever possible.
- Expansion, as possible, of workgroup efforts into the area of preventing chemical accidents.
- Evaluation of the convenience of having information on potential risks associated with counterterrorism.

The Workgroup members also had an in-depth discussion of the environmental indicators including further defining and refining the indicators, current databases available to measure the indicators, determining additional data needs, and a strategy for implementing the indicators. The changes to the indicators as agreed upon by the Workgroup members included:

Number and location of industries along the border posing risk that have coordinated emergency response plans. Workgroup recommendations: Measure both the total number of industries as well as those with plans. This would provide not only baseline, but also would provide a mechanism to measure progress.

Additional suggestion: Consider the possibility of having data about the inventories of chemical substances in facilities.

Number of organizations capable of responding to chemical emergencies along the border, by state and locality or municipality. Workgroup recommendations: Report this measure by categories which have been established by Mexico as indicated in their *Inventory of Resources for Emergency Response*.

Number of Sister Cities with Local Joint Contingency Plans. Workgroup recommendation: Develop performance-based criteria to ensure that plans are current and up-to-date.

Number of accidents of record per year, classified by type, frequency, and hazardous substance. Workgroup recommendation: Because of outreach to improve frequency of notification, increased reporting of accidents may not be reflective of an increase of incidents. Accordingly, a statement will be added to the discussion of the indicator to reflect this phenomenon.

III. NEXT JOINT RESPONSE TEAM (JRT) MEETING

The Workgroup members agreed to hold the JRT meeting from September 23-25, 1998 in San Antonio, Texas. Agenda items for the meeting include the following: linking the work of the Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup activities with the other Workgroups under Border 21; discussing workplan items for 1998/1999 including accomplishments and new items; tracking progress of environmental indicators; discussing contingency planning efforts at the Federal, State, and local involving the industrial sector; discussing contingency planning issues, including transportation, customs, involvement (if possible) of the industrial sector; information management issues; developing a strategy for exercising the JCP; developing an outreach/marketing strategy for



JRT products; presenting an overview potential risks associated with terrorism, and providing a training session or workshop on a topic related to contingency planning and emergency response.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Throughout the year, the workgroup will strive to establish better linkages to other workgroups, particularly the Hazardous and Solid Waste and the Environmental Information Resources Workgroups, to ensure communication on available data and cross-cutting issues.
- The workgroup agreed to revise the environmental indicators to better reflect available data and environmental goals.
- The JCP will be signed by the U.S. within the next month.
- The next Joint Response Team meeting will be held September 23-25, 1998, in San Antonio, Texas. Agenda items were discussed and agreed upon at the workgroup meeting.