

DESCRIPTION

The fact sheet is a brief document written in plain English to help residents understand highly technical laws, concepts, and information. The purpose of fact sheets is to provide site-related information to affected communities. Superfund focus groups indicate that many citizens are more comfortable with the name “site update,” and would be more inclined to read a site update than a fact sheet.

EPA uses several types of fact sheets:

- **Basic information fact sheet** to provide community residents with general site information and to keep them abreast of site activities and cleanup progress;
- **Proposed Plan fact sheet** to inform residents about EPA’s preferred remedy, provide a simple summary of the proposed plan, and notify the public of the opportunity to comment;
- **Special purpose fact sheet** to convey information about only one issue or event;
- **National Priorities List (NPL) Proposed Site** fact sheet to inform a community about EPA’s intent to add a site to the NPL and notify the public of the opportunity to comment; and
- **NPL Proposed Site Deletion** fact sheet to inform a community about EPA’s intent to delete a site from the NPL and notify the public of the opportunity to comment.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

Yes. Fact sheets are indicated by the following two regulatory requirements:

- **Proposed Plan Fact Sheet**—the NCP at 40 CFR § 300.430(f)(2) states that “the lead agency ... shall prepare a proposed plan that briefly describes the remedial alternatives analyzed by the lead agency, proposes a preferred remedial action alternative, and summarizes the information relied upon to select the preferred alternative.”
- **Fact Sheet on the Final Engineering Design**—the NCP at 40 CFR § 300.435(c)(3) states “[a]fter the completion of the final engineering design, the lead agency shall issue a fact sheet and provide, as appropriate, a public briefing prior to the initiation of the remedial action.”

MAKING IT WORK

WHEN TO USE

In addition to the requirements noted above, fact sheets are appropriate throughout the Superfund process. Superfund focus groups prefer several single-issue/single-sheet updates spread throughout the year, rather than one multiple-page/multiple-issue update. Many people agreed that a fact sheet with nothing to announce other than the fact that EPA is still involved and working toward site cleanup is reassuring. See the list of ideas at the end of the tab.

Do not use fact sheets to break bad news to the community. There are more effective tools to convey upsetting information. Also, do not rely solely on fact sheets to inform residents because many people do not read them and not everyone is likely to get one.

FACT SHEETS

How to Use

Follow the suggestions below and use the sample fact sheets at the end of this tool, or use the templates included on the diskette at the end of this tool.

Message: Before writing, identify your message. Most people cannot retain more than three primary messages from a document. Superfund focus groups show that several single page fact sheets spread out over time are more effective than one long fact sheet.

FYI content: Also include special information, such as dates of upcoming meetings, location and hours of the *Information Repository*, and RPM and CIC names, addresses, local and toll-free phone numbers, fax numbers, and E-mail addresses. Always put special information in a text box in the lower right corner. Include the fact sheet date and number.

Format: The format should be easy to read. Research shows that a 10 to 12 point typeface with serif, such as Times New Roman that you see here, is easy to read. Make fact sheets visually interesting by using pictures, graphs, or diagrams to accompany textual information. Too much text and not enough white space makes the page appear gray and daunting. Place pertinent facts in text boxes, or make them stand out some other way.

Presentation: Make the “U.S. Environmental Protection Agency” (not “EPA”) and the site name prominent in the banner. Always start with the primary message in the upper left corner. Put it in a box or in some other eye-catching format. Use a catchy (*not hokey*) headline. Vary the color of new fact sheets.

Writing: Generally, material prepared for the general public should be written at the eighth grade level. However, check site demographics and write at the grade level indicated. (*LandView* demographic profiles are available in every region and over the *Internet*.) Use Grammatik (available in WordPerfect) to check for readability. Avoid bureaucratic jargon or highly technical language. If necessary, *Translate* fact sheets into foreign languages.

Distribution: Do not rely on the *Mailing List*. Identify your primary target area (usually the area most impacted or likely to be impacted by the site), then mail fact sheets to all residences within that target area, even if you have to address them as “An important environmental message for the family at ...” Announce when fact sheets are available. Use press releases, public service announcements, and public TV and radio. State where fact sheets are available and a contact name, address, and phone number.

The Proposed Plan Fact Sheet: This is the most important fact sheet you will produce. The Proposed Plan is not a legal document and does not bind EPA to any action, like a Record of Decision (ROD). The Proposed Plan is a communications document required by the NCP for the purpose of informing the general public about all alternatives analyzed and EPA’s preferred remedy and notifying them of an opportunity to comment on it. The Plan is a concise, easy-to-read synopsis of the actions EPA proposes to take. It must be written in sufficient detail to enable the average citizen to understand and comment. The Plan should be released as a fact sheet, preferably no more than eight pages, and distributed to all stakeholders. If the Region prefers, it may prepare a more formal Proposed Plan, place it in the *Information Repository*, summarize it with a Proposed Plan Fact Sheet, and use the fact sheet to direct readers to copies of the formal plan.

Start the Proposed Plan fact sheet with the proposed remedy. The primary message is the remedy proposed for the site, so start with that rather than background, other remedies considered, or anything else. Explain that the fact sheet briefly summarizes the formal plan for the remedy. Include why the remedy was chosen above other proposals. Then list the other

[See Information Repository, Tab 21](#)



[See LandView, Tab 10; Internet, Tab 10; Translation Services, Tab 43; Mailing List, Tab 23](#)



remedies that were considered. Explain in a few sentences, each, what each remedy would entail and why EPA proposes to eliminate it. After that, offer a more detailed explanation of the proposed remedy. Provide general information on the findings of the RI/FS that made this remedy the preferred option. Explain in more detail what will be done to clean up the site, the impact it will have on the community, the cost, and the duration of construction.

Include formal plan availability. If applicable, be sure to announce that the formal plan is available for review and comment in the *Information Repository* and include the address and hours of operation as well as a phone number for requesting copies. Include instructions on how and when to submit public comments.

Tips

- Hand out fact sheets as people enter meetings or hearings, or place them on chairs before the meeting starts.
- Have extras available and encourage people to take copies to friends.
- Bring the latest fact sheet with you on community visits, and hand it out to residents.
- Ask permission to leave several facts sheets at churches, clubs, libraries, and stores.
- Ask principals to send home a fact sheet with every student.
- Distribute door-to-door with door hangers; *never use a mailbox for anything but mail.*
- Pay to have the fact sheet printed in the local paper; ask them to keep copies in their lobby.
- Offer fact sheets as inserts in neighborhood association newsletters.
- Consider making a *Video* fact sheet of the progress of site work. Show it at meetings, and broadcast it on local cable access channels. Place two copies in the *Information Repository*. Advertise the video and how to get it.
- Contaminant information in fact sheets should contain the chemical name, media contaminated, and contaminant concentration at the site versus the normal range.
- Consider adding fact sheets to an appropriate Web page.



[See Videos, Tab 45](#)

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Exhibits, Tab 13](#)
- [Internet, Tab 10](#)
- [LandView, Tab 10](#)
- [On-Site Activities, Tab 26](#)
- [Special Events, Tab 38](#)

ATTACHED ITEMS WITHIN THIS TOOL

- Attachment 1: Good Times to Send a Fact Sheet

ATTACHMENT 1: GOOD TIMES TO SEND A FACT SHEET

- At the beginning of the Remedial Investigation
- At the end of the Remedial Investigation
- When the Feasibility Study is released
- When the Record of Decision is released
- When the Proposed Plan is released (Required)
- When the Engineering Design is released (Required)
- When construction is complete
- When the site is deleted from the NPL
- When a special site activity is planned.
 - For example, one CIC prepared a fact sheet for a stack demolition planned at a site. The fact sheet related how and why EPA decided to demolish the stacks, information on the stacks and how they would be demolished, community activities surrounding the demolition, and issues of community concern such as dust control.
- Whenever the community expresses a concern over a specific site activity
- When you perceive confusion in the community regarding a site-related issue
- To clarify a misunderstanding
- To keep community members informed, particularly if site activities will take place over a long period of time