

DESCRIPTION

Local resources are any information sources on a Superfund site that are available to you or citizens in the community. Tapping into established local resources can help you:

- Spread information throughout an entire community;
- Enhance your credibility;
- Gain access to certain groups or meetings normally closed to you; and
- Keep apprised of changing or developing situations within the community.

USING THE RESOURCE

WHEN TO USE

Local resources should be used throughout the entire Superfund process to inform and involve local citizens. Generally, the earlier in the process they are used, the better.

HOW TO USE

- The attachment at the end of this tab has a list of various local resources and some “starter” ideas on how to use them. This list is far from inclusive; it is intended to help jump start your creative thinking. As you think of other resources, or other uses, please tell CIOC so that others may benefit from your experience. Perhaps the best advice is to tailor your use of local resources to each specific community. For instance:
- If there is a local morning radio personality who is particularly popular, try to enlist that person’s help in announcing regular updates about the site;
- Consider setting up a phone chain headed by the leader(s) of the local civic or service club(s) to provide regular updates to key people in the community;
- Ask the local newspaper or cable TV station to run monthly updates about the site;
- Urge local religious organizations to set up a table with information or posters about the site during social hours held before or after services, or at local events such as an annual strawberry festival; and
- Take advantage of local colleges and universities.

Colleges and Universities

Local colleges and universities are frequently overlooked, but are potentially powerful resources. They can provide an element of third party objectivity that may be difficult to find elsewhere. They can provide information directly to the community and offer student support and facility access, such as specialized libraries for residents to study site contamination and technologies.

Using them directly, for your own use . . .

Subject Matter Experts: Virtually all universities have departments devoted to the hard sciences, including chemistry and biology. Furthermore, many now have departments devoted to environmental sciences, with some having centers specializing in such areas as risk communication. For example, the University of Pennsylvania in Region 3 and Rutgers University in Region 2 have such centers, and EPA has tapped the risk communications expertise of Peter

LOCAL RESOURCES

[See Public Meetings, Tab 32; Informal Activities, Tab 20; Workshops, Tab 46](#)



Sandman from Rutgers on numerous occasions. Faculty members and graduate students may be especially interested in working with local communities and could serve as third party subject matter experts. You may find them willing to:

- Speak to communities about the situation in their community;
- Accompany you or the RPM on community visits;
- Make a presentation at a **Public Meeting, Informal Activities, or Workshop;**
- Be available to answer questions from residents; or
- Meet with local residents, without EPA personnel present, to avoid the impression of conflict of interest.

Data Review and Analysis: Local university professors may play a larger role at a site by taking on some type of continuing project. You may be able to come up with a site-related project that provides a professor with data for research and citizens with helpful information. Safety may preclude students from monitoring directly site conditions, but you could offer to provide faculty with EPA's data to analyze and report back to local residents. Graduate students, particularly those in doctoral programs, are excellent sources of expertise as well. A graduate student who works under the supervision of a local professor can be very valuable in lending credibility to site information for community members.

If data analysis and interpretation are not feasible at a site, or have already been concluded, local university classes may undertake projects to investigate different solutions to the site problems and present the information to local residents. Also, if EPA has set up some type of monitoring system at the site to assure local communities that the contaminants at the site are under control, local college classes could monitor such data and provide updates to the community.

Research Opportunities: Professors may be interested in community-outreach or risk perception studies. For example, a professor may be interested in testing a particular tool or approach for risk communication in the site community.

Monitoring the Site: Local university personnel also can be extremely valuable after cleanup has been concluded, particularly if a monitoring system is part of the cleanup plan. A local professor can be enlisted to have a new class each year monitor data at the site after cleanup. This may help assure local residents that an objective party is watching over the site.

Additional Services: Universities can also help meet your non-technical needs. For instance, universities may provide meeting facilities, facilitators, and mediators; lead dispute resolution sessions; and provide translation services. All of these areas offer potential research prospects for professors and practical experience for graduate students. To learn about these opportunities, contact management, communication, or foreign language departments.

Technical Outreach and Services for Communities (TOSC): EPA has established five TOSC centers on university campuses throughout the country to provide technical support to local communities. TOSC centers are funded by EPA for the sole purpose of providing technical assistance directly to communities. While you could help a community access this service, TOSC centers are independent of EPA influence and work directly with the local residents. Their services and specialties are varied. Refer to the TOSC tab elsewhere in this Toolkit, or contact CIOC for information about the center that supports your Region.

[See Technical Assistance for Communities, Tab 41](#)



LOCAL RESOURCES

Using them indirectly for community members . . .

Reference facilities: Virtually all colleges and universities have good library facilities; many also have smaller, more specialized resources such as an engineering library that can serve as an excellent source of technical information. You need to call the local university and inquire as to the types of information resources they have available. Although most universities allow area residents to use their libraries, you should not assume that this is automatically true. Check with the head librarian to confirm their policy before promoting the library to the community. Such a courtesy will go a long way in gaining additional support from the library staff. It also will allow you to explain your purpose to the reference librarian, who, in turn, can alert the library staff and possibly develop a list of specific resources for community members to read. Reference librarians at the university level are, themselves, excellent sources of information.

Tips

- An effective way to use local resources is to know how information travels within a given community.
- Remember the “What’s in it for me?” principle. Human nature is such that you will find it easier to enlist support if you can present an intrinsic reason for the professor or any other local resource to help.
- When approaching the academic community, be aware that professors are highly protective of their academic freedom. They will not be your mouthpiece or view themselves as working for EPA. As such, the chances are great that they will say something that, although accurate or true, you or the team may wish they had left unsaid. There is also the risk that a professor may have his or her own agenda.

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Media, Tab 25](#)
- [Informal Activities, Tab 20](#)

ATTACHED ITEMS WITHIN THIS RESOURCE

- Attachment 1: Some Local Resources and Possible Uses
- Attachment 2: Some Places to Start When Approaching the Academic Community

ATTACHMENT 1: LOCAL RESOURCES AND POSSIBLE USES

- Local radio personalities or talk show hosts
 - Provide regular site updates
 - Advertise site events such as workshops or meetings
- Local civic or service clubs
 - Organize phone chains
 - Distribute site information, such as fact sheets at meetings
 - Provide forums for speaking
 - Help organize site events, such as providing refreshments at workshops or demonstrations
- Local newspapers or cable TV stations
 - Provide regular site updates
 - Advertise site events
- Local religious organizations
 - Distribute site information during social hours at weekly services
 - Host workshop or fair with information booths about site;
 - Provide access to local celebrations or special events held in the community, such as annual strawberry festival
- Local chambers of commerce
 - Provide calendar of and access to special events and community celebrations, such as a fall arts and crafts festival
 - Provide access to community leaders
- Colleges and universities
 - Provide technical information
 - Provide citizen access to research facilities, including campus libraries that contain site related information;
 - Provide access to professor and classes that may be willing to take on projects such as site data analysis



ATTACHMENT 2: PLACES TO START WHEN WORKING WITH A COLLEGE

- Schools of communication
- Risk communication departments within business schools or schools of communication
- Environmental management schools or departments
- Engineering schools or departments
- Risk management research centers
- Public policy schools or departments
- Technical libraries
- Reference librarians

