

SPECIAL EVENTS

DESCRIPTION

Special events are activities near the site that celebrate the accomplishment of key milestones in the cleanup process. Special events educate people about site activities while highlighting the progress made at the site. Moreover, Special Events can add a sense of closure for the community and site team members. Special events are an excellent way to involve community members in a positive activity surrounding the site.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

No.

MAKING IT WORK

WHEN TO USE

The timing of special events can coincide with the completion or beginning of key milestones. Be creative in determining when such an event might be appropriate, such as when a particular eyesore at the site is demolished.

HOW TO USE

EPA will not pay for food or beverages, either directly or indirectly through its contractors. However, refreshments can be paid for by a sponsor. Consider approaching the Potentially Responsible Party (PRP) to sponsor the event. Be sure to get community members involved to make it more their event than yours. For example, you may form a panel of community members to handle refreshments or games. Local businesses may donate supplies, services, food, or printing.

Contact the *Media*. Besides providing publicity, they may co-sponsor the event. Think about the pictures, graphics, and message that you can give the media to highlight your event. If you are planning a large special event, consider inviting a local news anchorperson to be Master of Ceremonies. Promote the event well in advance.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: MAJOR MILESTONE

One CIC organized a celebration around the demolition of four smokestacks on a Superfund site. The stacks had been somewhat of an eyesore in the community. The media was involved, as well as the regional administrator and a local congressman. Local residents printed programs for the demolition and organized a fair with a helicopter ride. The CIC distributed a *Fact Sheet* and media package about the stack demolition.

EXAMPLE 2: COMPLETION

Another CIC held a ceremony when work at a site was completed. The occasion was the completion of on-site revegetation to create a bird sanctuary. Since the site appeared to be nothing more than a grassy field, the celebration focused on the actual removal of EPA's Superfund sign and the unveiling of a new sign proclaiming the site to be a wildlife refuge.



[See Media,
Tab 25](#)



[See Fact
Sheets,
Tab 15](#)

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EXAMPLE 3: EDUCATION

Another CIC had a site where lead was a major threat to children. The site team borrowed a program called “Get the Lead Out” from the State of New Jersey and held a special event at the local firehouse to educate kids and their families on the dangers of lead. Parents of the children who attended provided refreshments. There was a coloring contest for the children (children received pages from the coloring book that accompanies the Superfund slide show, and they brought the colored pages to the event for judging). At the event, lots of prizes were provided for the winners, the local newspaper agreed to publish the winning entries, and the firehouse was decorated with all the children’s art work. The Superfund slide show for kids was shown at the event, and narrated in terms they could understand. The site Remedial Project Manager (RPM) also attended and described his job in simple terms. He also brought two protective suits with masks, respirators, and gloves and explained their uses. Children took turns putting on the gear and explaining what it did, and EPA took Polaroid pictures for them to keep.

Tips

- Tailor celebrations or special events to a given community’s interests or concerns.
- Involve local residents.
- Involve the media.

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCE IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Media, Tab 25](#)
- [Fact Sheets, Tab 15](#)

ATTACHED ITEMS WITHIN THIS TOOL

- Attachment 1: Some Occasions for Special Events
- Attachment 2: Special Event Planning Checklist

ATTACHMENT 1: SOME OCCASIONS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Major Milestones:

- On-site demolitions (*e.g.*, smokestack demolition).
- Transition to the next phase.
- Recognize community, PRP involvement.
- Downgrading of on-site personnel protective gear.

Special topic educational campaigns (*e.g.*, lead and children).

Construction completion (*e.g.*, “changing of the signs” ceremony).

ATTACHMENT 2: SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

To plan a celebration or special event, follow these simple steps:

- ___ Identify the message you wish to convey.
- ___ Identify the “hook”—what is it that will motivate people to participate?
- ___ Identify your target audience.
- ___ Brainstorm with the RPM, other CICs, and local residents about what type of event would be best.
- ___ Identify the best location for the event.
- ___ Pick a date and time—make sure to consider the community calendar so that your celebration does not compete with a local event, such as a summer craft fair or fall festival, or a popular vacation time in the community.
- ___ Make arrangements for speakers, food, and games; residents can help here—involve them in the planning.
- ___ Prepare media packages to distribute at the event.
- ___ Mail information to community members.
- ___ Publicize the event. One mailing may not be enough. Consider door hangers, public service announcements, announcements at local civic clubs, church bulletins, and school flyers. Consider using invitations.
- ___ Verify all arrangements with speakers, vendors, and workers.
- ___ Fax a press release to all media contacts. On the day of the event, follow up with a phone call.
- ___ Arrive early and brief all participants before the start of the event.
- ___ Go through this checklist.
- ___ Hold a “Lessons Learned” meeting.