

DESCRIPTION

Using the telephone for conference calls and for toll-free, site update hotlines can be an effective tool for promoting community involvement at a Superfund site.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

No.

MAKING IT WORK

WHEN TO USE

This tool is useful throughout the entire remedial or removal process. When to use this tool depends on many site factors. Conference calls can be used anytime you need quick input from, or communication with, a large number of stakeholders. Conference calls should not just be reserved for internal EPA meetings. The use of hotlines for site updates also is useful throughout the entire Superfund process.


HOW TO USE

Ten steps to set up a pre-recorded update for site activities:

1. Check with the *Communication Strategy* to get the right message to the right audience;
2. Get an 800 or 888 number (with voice-mail-type capabilities) from the phone company;
3. Restrict access to the number to a certain area by working with the phone company to get the narrowest targeting possible for your situation;
4. Check with the citizens to determine how frequently they would like updates;
5. Determine the cost and procedure for updating your message;
6. Decide on what frequency you can support, then work with the residents to reach an acceptable compromise if necessary. Together, decide on a deadline for completing each update, and then commit to meeting that deadline;
7. Gain site team consensus on the contents of the message;
8. Record the update starting with the date and time of the update;
9. Promote the new service in the affected community. Consider printing an ad or flyers; and
10. Monitor the use of the hotline and use feedback to improve it.

EXAMPLE

One CIC used the telephone to change a highly contentious site with years of controversy into an uncontested Record of Decision (ROD). The CIC held regular conference calls with EPA representatives, reporters, editors, local officials, and interested residents. Twelve lines were dedicated for each call, with a set telephone number reserved for all groups taking part in the call. The date and time of the call were announced in advance, with the slots filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. The calls started out as quarterly then, as work intensified, became

 [See
Communication Strategies,
Tab 3](#)

Last Updated:
September 2002

TELEPHONE

monthly, bi-weekly, then weekly. The CIC also placed weekly updates on a toll-free hotline that citizens could call at their convenience. A fresh update would be in place by a set time each week. This not only informed affected residents, but helped head off questions and saved the CIC time each week tracking down and responding to individual messages.

Tips

- Make pre-recorded messages clear, concise, and uncomplicated.
- Ensure the site team agrees with the information you provide.
- Ensure accurate information.
- Use community members who want to be involved.

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Groups, Tab 4](#)
- [Media, Tab 25](#)
- [TAGs, Tab 41](#)

ATTACHED ITEMS WITHIN THIS TOOL

- Attachment 1: Arranging for a Toll Free Number
- Attachment 2: Example Message
- Attachment 3: Appropriate Conference Call Participants

ATTACHMENT 1: ARRANGING FOR A TOLL-FREE NUMBER

To arrange for a toll-free number with pre-recorded site updates, make sure you have answers to the following questions, and then consult with your facilities management personnel responsible for telephone arrangements:

- How long will your recorded message be?
- How often and when will the message be updated (*e.g.*, every other Monday)?
- Who will be regularly updating the message (name and phone extension)?
- What volume of calls do you expect to come in to the 800 number?
- What geographic area will these calls most likely come from?
- How long will you need the 800 number?
- Who will pay for the number/how should the account be billed?

ATTACHMENT 2: EXAMPLE MESSAGE

NOTE: This is a fictional example; it is recognized that not everything on the list could occur within one week.

This is _____ Superfund site update message number 10, for the week beginning Monday, February 2, 1998.

To recap last week, the EPA team accomplished:

- The installation of three monitoring wells;
- Sample collection from five residential wells;
- The installation of four air monitoring devices;
- A Poster Session for the New Town High School; and
- The expansion of the site's mailing list, by enlisting local civic groups to mail updates and fact sheets to their members.

This week's activities include:

- Testing of the three monitoring wells installed last week;
- Collection of core samples from the sledge pond area of the site;
- Completion of the site Observation Deck; we'll confirm this next week and announce the hours that it is available;
- A site tour is scheduled to begin at 1 pm on February 3, 1998;
- The latest Fact Sheet is scheduled to be mailed on February 4, 1998, to all parties on the site's mailing list; and
- The Fact Sheet can also be viewed at the Information Repository, at Howells Library, and on the Internet at

The work hours on site will continue to be the same.

Next week's anticipated projects include:

- Sediment samples from the site;
- A Public Meeting to be held on February 11, 1998, to discuss the possibility of the following actions:
 - The installation of a vertical barrier around the contaminant source area and the northern portion of the ground-water plume;
 - The installation of a multi-layer cap over the area bounded by the vertical barrier;
 - The possible relocation of two residences; the construction and installation of the cap would require relocation of approximately two residences;
- Continued monitoring of groundwater and surface water.

Thank you for your interest in the _____ Site. Call again next week for further updates.



ATTACHMENT 3: APPROPRIATE CONFERENCE CALL PARTICIPANTS

- RPM
- CIC
- Other team members as appropriate
- Local officials
- TAG group leader or representative
- CAG leader or representative
- Interested media
- PRP representatives
- Other interested citizens

