



**United States-Mexico Joint Response Team Meeting  
San Antonio, Texas  
September 23-24, 1998**

**SUMMARY**

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

All were welcomed to San Antonio for the fourth meeting of the expanded Joint Response Team (JRT), which included representatives from U.S. and Mexico federal, state, and local agencies involved in chemical emergency prevention, preparedness, and response along the United States-Mexico border. Participants then introduced themselves, stating their organizational affiliations. (See the attachment for the list of participants and contact information.)

The purpose and objectives for the meeting were set forth, which included the following:

- To gain an understanding of the contingency planning efforts at the federal, state, and local levels;
- To discuss the lessons learned from recent exercises of the federal notification system and make revisions to that system, as needed;
- To discuss and finalize the JRT Implementation Plan for 1999 and determine the future direction of the JRT;
- To review the environmental indicators and the information collected for them and determine any adjustments needed;
- To discuss various information management tools; and
- To create a draft outreach/marketing strategy for the JRT.

Two major themes were also set forth: (1) how industry can be partners in the process, and (2) how the JRT can provide assistance at the local level.

**CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Jim Makris (U.S. EPA), the U.S. Co-Chair, provided his overview and conclusions at the close of the meeting, which are listed below.

- ▣ Update and expand the 1999 JRT Implementation Plan based on suggestions and comments submitted during the meeting, including:
  - ▶ Develop a training strategy for border states and sister cities that expands emergency preparedness and response training;
  - ▶ Improve understanding of chemicals being transported across the border and information about transportation accidents;



- ▶ Improve education of the public and small- and medium-size businesses about chemical risks in their community and chemical emergency prevention, preparedness, and response efforts and requirements; and
- ▶ Continue technical assistance for sister cities for planning and exercising plans, specifically including two exercises currently planned for Yuma and Piedras Negras.
- ▣ Continue to improve notification policies and procedures, including:
  - ▶ Update notification lists for both the United States and Mexico, particularly at the state level (i.e., U.S. state representatives, PROFEPA state representatives, and Civil Protection state representatives);
  - ▶ Ensure language translation is available when chemical accidents are reported to either the U.S. National Response Center or Mexico's response center (COATEA); and
  - ▶ Testing the notification system in all border states over the next year.
- ▣ Implement the distribution strategy for the CAMEO (Computer-Aided Management of Emergency Operations) software and provide sister cities with training on how to use the system. Include a series of Spanish CAMEO sessions during the 1999 CAMEO conference. Also, provide chemical inventory information to input into Spanish CAMEO.
- ▣ Revise the JRT environmental indicators based on comments and continue to collect, in an improved fashion, the indicator data.
- ▣ Increase use of the U.S. EPA border offices (San Diego, California, and San Antonio, Texas).
- ▣ Establish a workgroup (chaired by U.S. EPA Region 6) to link all appropriate websites to a JRT network and to organize outreach efforts.
- ▣ Hold a sister city technical transfer conference with presentations by sister city agencies to share expertise between sister cities and among sister city pairs.
- ▣ Continue efforts to resolve outstanding joint response issues identified by the Cross-Border Workgroup.

Carlos Gonzalez (PROFEPA), the Mexico Co-Chair, added his overview and conclusions, which are listed below.

- ▣ Focus renewed contingency planning efforts on small- and medium-sized businesses, which are the majority of businesses in Mexico.
- ▣ Maximize benefits by having emergency response training, information systems, equipment, and community outreach all complement one another.



- ▶ For example, due to difficulties in obtaining information directly from industry in Mexico, determine what information can be easily obtained from local fire departments for the environmental indicators.
- ▣ Incorporate maps from INEGI (National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information)/U.S. Geological Survey into sister city plans (for example, the upcoming Ciudad Juarez-El Paso plan).
- ▣ Link CAMEO to the maps from INEGI/U.S. Geological Survey (a long-term project).
- ▣ Conduct a pilot joint response exercise in the state of Coahuila.
- ▣ Develop responses for specific substances (as was done for ammonia) in pamphlet form for sister cities.
- ▣ Have the next JRT meeting in Guanajuato, Mexico, focus on more of the specifics.
- ▣ Apply the information gained through the JRT to the interior of Mexico.

## **CONTINGENCY PLANNING UPDATE**

Jim Makris (U.S. EPA) reported that the Joint Contingency Plan, which now includes revisions from the last JRT meeting, is currently making its way through the appropriate diplomatic channels in order to be finalized and signed. Next, Kim Jennings (U.S. EPA) briefed participants on U.S. federal laws regulating hazardous material facilities, which include the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act Title III, Chemical Accident Investigation, and the upcoming Clean Air Act Risk Management Plans. Carlos Gonzalez (PROFEPA) presented Mexico's federal laws, which include the creation of the National Civil Protection System (May 6, 1986) and authorization of PROFEPA to provide environmental emergency response recommendations, evaluation of damage, and prevention programs (Articles 68 and 170).

Next, JRT members exchanged information on the programs, projects, and activities they are implementing at the federal, state, and local levels. In addition to these projects, many issues were raised. Both the projects and issues are included below in two lists.

### ***Projects***

- U.S. Department of the Interior announced that the U.S. Geological Survey and Mexico's INEGI are conducting a joint aerial photography and mapping program for the border region.
- U.S. EPA San Diego border office holds an "open house" session each month to discuss environmental topics.
- Texas Association of Hispanic Firefighters keeps the community informed during an emergency through a bilingual FM radio broadcast.
- Texas Association of Hispanic Firefighters has provided training with Mexico's Civil Protection for over ten years and has an academy for Mexican firefighters.
- Cameron County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) has conducted commodity flow studies and completed a sister city plan.
- Hidalgo LEPC hosts university seminars for industry on emergency management.



- San Antonio Fire Department receives a copy of “certificate of occupancy” that lists the terms (including chemicals) for any new businesses, which is added to their computer database. Then the facility and hazmat team work together to create a response plan. This information is shared with the public. Fire Department personnel also visit every fixed site facility and suggest safe practices.
- BorderPlex coordination group in Brownsville-Matamoros facilitates cross-border communication and coordination.
- Mexico’s Civil Protection inspects each facility twice a year in addition to surprise drills.
- U.S. Department of Transportation presence at border crossings has drastically improved compliance due to fines.
- Truckers with hazardous materials must provide that information to authorities 24 hours prior to transporting the shipment across the border.
- U.S. EPA Region 6 completed cross-border commodity flow studies for Texas border cities.
- U.S. EPA Region 6 has Clean Air Act Risk Management Plan information available in Spanish.
- U.S. EPA Region 6 produced a course on how to respond to ammonia releases, which includes training materials and a video.
- U.S. EPA Region 6 developed a half-day risk communication workshop and is translating it into Spanish.
- Mexico adopted U.S. Department of Transportation regulations governing placards, overweight vehicles, tires, and hazardous materials.
- Corpus Christi LEPC developed response procedures for the 42 most prevalent chemicals in their area. They will be available in Spanish next year.
- U.S. EPA published two issues of the “Semiannual Report on United States-Mexico Border Contingency Planning Activities.” Information for the next issue was requested and should be sent to U.S. EPA Headquarters.

### *Issues*

- Small- and medium-sized facilities pose particular challenges in both the United States and Mexico:
  - They are not regulated by PROFEPA (being federal) but are covered by Civil Protection (being local firefighters). Obtaining information at the federal level is not directly possible.
  - Need to set licensing requirements to identify hazards and ensure the facility is prepared before operations commence.
  - Need to develop a simple system for them to dispose of hazardous wastes.
  - Might be able to work through small business trade association to self license.
  - Need to include small business associations on the JRT.
- Assistance is needed at the local (sister city) level in both the United States and Mexico:
  - Need continuous technical assistance for local planners and responders. Possibly the parent companies of maquiladoras could provide training to local responders. Possibly the International City/County Management Association could host one meeting for each sister city pair each year. Alternatively, host a technical transfer conference for all sister cities.
  - Need innovative funding for LEPCs.
  - Need computers and training.
  - Need response equipment.



- Provide information to the public about risks from chemicals at small and medium industry, as well as large facilities. Possibly hold an “emergency response day” in each sister city to promote education of the public and businesses.
- There is too much focus on fixed-site facilities while transportation is a major source of chemical emergencies.
- Bridges are located at the center of border cities, hence that hazardous materials must be transported through the most densely populated area, which results in greater risks.
- Difficult to maintain the preparedness effort momentum; interest exists during the immediate aftermath of major accidents and then declines.
- To ease problems at the border, JRT programs should be extended to the next tier of cities within Mexico (for example, Monterrey, Hermosillo, Torreon) where many hazardous materials shipments originate.
- Continue to work to resolve outstanding joint response issues resulting from the Cross-Border Workgroup, especially liability issues for cross-border response.

## **NOTIFICATION**

Sherry Fielding (U.S. EPA) briefed the JRT members on a recent exercise of the JRT notification system. Sayed Qadir (U.S. National Response Center, NRC) explained that the NRC serves as a communication center, not a response center, and has constant access to translation through the AT&T operator service. Luis Chang (PROFEPA) presented an overview of the newly created COATEA (Guidance Center for Attention to Environmental Emergencies), which is part of PROFEPA and will serve as the response/communication center in Mexico.

### *Issues*

- Notification lists were found to be incomplete during the exercise and needed to be updated, especially at the state level (i.e., U.S. states, PROFEPA state representatives, and Civil Protection state representatives).
- Translation must be available when chemical accidents are report to either the U.S. National Response Center or Mexico’s COATEA.
- Testing the notification system in all states needs to occur, possibly over the course of the next year.

## **LINKING THE JRT WITH OTHER WORKGROUPS UNDER BORDER XXI**

Rebekah Hoffacker (U.S. EPA Region 9, San Diego Border Office) briefed the JRT members on how the other workgroups under the Border XXI program can link to and aid the JRT. (Note that the JRT is considered one of the Border XXI workgroups, namely the “Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup.”) Specific types of assistance other Border XXI workgroups can provide include mapping, university and community education programs, and public outreach. Ms. Hoffacker also announced that a draft of the fact sheet for the JRT/Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup is available, and a final version of the Solid Waste Workgroup fact sheet has been published.

### *Issues*

- The Border XXI mapping subgroup is not aware of CAMEO nor the opportunity to both use maps from CAMEO and to supply maps for use in CAMEO.



- There is no equivalent counterpart on the Mexico side of the border proving this type of information coordination and community outreach.

## **JRT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: UPDATE AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

Kim Jennings (U.S. EPA) and Carlos Gonzalez (PROFEPA) discussed the current JRT Implementation Plan and received input on the implementation plan for the coming year. JRT members suggested retaining all outstanding issues in the new implementation plan and continuing to work toward their resolution. It was also noted that the implementation plan should include items that may take more than a year to complete in order to provide long-term direction for the JRT. (The items listed in the “Conclusions and Next Steps” section are the basis for next year’s implementation plan. In addition, a joint exercise with the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency was proposed.)

## **ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS**

Kim Jennings (U.S. EPA) gave an overview of the four JRT environmental indicators and an explanation of the baseline data that have been collected to date. The four environmental indicators are currently as follows: (1) number of industries with emergency response plans, (2) number of emergency response organizations, (3) number of sister cities with local joint contingency plans, and (4) number of accidents per year. Following her briefing, an open discussion raised a number of issues and suggestions, as listed below. Based on these comments, the indicators will be revised and then shared with the JRT for further review.

### ***Issues***

- Need to carefully define what constitutes a “hazmat team” and indicate each team’s level of training. In the United States, the training is designated as OSHA level A, B, or C. In Mexico, there is no equivalent to the OSHA levels.
- There are weaknesses associated with the Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) database (i.e., only contains initial notification information), so other sources of U.S. accident data are needed.
  - U.S. EPA Region 6 has edited the ERNS data for its region to make it more accurate; U.S. EPA Region 9 does not edit its ERNS data.
- Difficult at the federal level to obtain information from industry (especially in Mexico).
  - The best data (for both the United States and Mexico) may come from local fire departments because they track the potentially hazardous industries within their precinct in order to request funding increases and justify equipment purchases to their local governments.
- In Mexico, only large incidents are reported and known about at the federal level.

## **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

Glenn Sekavec (U.S. Department of the Interior) and Ken Osborn (U.S. Geological Survey) briefed the JRT members on a joint project between the United States and Mexico to map the border region using aerial photography by the year 2005. The agency in Mexico participating in this effort is INEGI (National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information).



Sheri-Lin Thomas (Technical Response Planning, Inc.) briefed the JRT members on how a facility response plan can be digitized and made easily accessible in CD ROM format.

Sherry Fielding (U.S. EPA) provided a review of the various information management tools available. The Spanish version of CAMEO (Computer-Aided Management of Emergency Operations) software has been released and 10 copies will be distributed to each of the 14 pairs of sister cities.

### *Issues*

- Spanish CAMEO lacks a chemical database.
  - Linkages to other existing databases might supply needed information (e.g., U.S. EPA Region 6 data).
  - Civil Protection in Mexico agreed to provide information on hazardous materials present at facilities in the Mexican sister cities.
- Need training on Spanish CAMEO.
  - U.S. EPA Region 6 agreed to host the first Spanish CAMEO training in Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras and Del Rio-Acuña.
  - Include a series of Spanish CAMEO sessions during the 1999 CAMEO conference.
  - Training is also planned for New Mexico.
- Need to establish link to mapping efforts (U.S. Geological Survey, LandView).
- Need to establish link to other Border XXI workgroups.

### **OUTREACH/MARKETING**

Kenneth Harlan (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Region 6) briefed the JRT members on how his agency conducts outreach, marketing, and exercises. The philosophy FEMA uses is that a community that must respond together must also train together. FEMA exercises often start at the hospital and work backward to the accident to ensure response capability. The support program they have developed for small communities is called CHER-CAP (Comprehensive Hazmat Emergency Response-Community Assistance Program), which is a systematic approach to planning, developing, conducting, evaluating, and documenting exercises. FEMA also supplies example SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), which might be of particular use to sister cities in developing response plans.

Jim Staves (U.S. EPA Region 6) facilitated a discussion on outreach and marketing activities for the JRT. While the JRT has produced good documents and guidance materials and has done an extensive amount of work in the border area for contingency planning and emergency response, many officials at the federal, state, and local (especially sister city) levels are unaware of these efforts. The projects proposed to address this issue are listed below.

### *Projects*

- Hold a sister city technical transfer conference with presentations by sister city agencies to share expertise between sister cities and among sister city pairs.
- Establish a workgroup (chaired by U.S. EPA Region 6) to link all appropriate websites to a JRT website.
- Make the public aware of this JRT linked website.
- Develop communication/outreach strategies and materials with assistance of the U.S. EPA border offices in San Diego and in Region 6.



- Develop communication/outreach strategies and materials with assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Customs.
- Establish communication/outreach centers in the Mexican cities of Tijuana, Matamoros, and Ciudad Juarez.
- Establish an outreach representative from Mexico similar to San Diego border office outreach representative.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

In addition to the items listed in the section “Conclusions and Next Steps,” the following action items came out of the meeting:

- U.S. EPA will include the projects mentioned by JRT members during the meeting in the next issue of the Semiannual Report.
- The JRT will invite representatives from small business associations to the next JRT meeting.
- The JRT will coordinate with the Binational Group on Ports and Services, which is helping to close old ports and locate new ports of entry.
- U.S. EPA will link the mapping portion of CAMEO to the Border XXI mapping subgroup and the U.S. Geological Survey/INEGI border mapping effort.
- The JRT will conduct a joint exercise with the International City/County Management Association.
- The JRT will pursue the idea of creating an outreach representative from Mexico (similar to the U.S. EPA San Diego border office representative) and raise this issue at the National Coordinators Meeting.
- The Corpus Christi LEPC will share copies of its publications and video with U.S. EPA.
- U.S. EPA San Diego border office will contact San Diego State University concerning the lack of data from Mexico on its web site.
- The JRT will work with Coahuila Civil Protection, Piedras Negras-Eagle Pass, and Acuña-Del Rio to schedule exercises.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Carlos Gonzalez (PROFEPA) announced that the next JRT meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 1999 in Guanajuato, Mexico.





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**AGENDA**

**September 23, 1998**

**9:00 - 9:30 am            Registration**

**9:30 - 10:00 am        Welcome and Opening Remarks**

*Participants will introduce themselves and provide the name of the Agency they represent. The JRT co-chairs will provide participants with a background on the JRT and its activities and highlight the overall objectives and expected outcomes for the meeting.*

- Introductions of Participants
- Background
- Meeting Objectives

**10:00 - 12:30**

**Contingency Planning Update**

*Federal officials will provide an update on the U.S./Mexico Joint Contingency Plan (JCP). Both U.S. and Mexico will brief participants on the laws regulating their hazardous material facilities. Sister City representatives who have finalized their Joint Sister City Contingency Plan will highlight successes and lessons learned in developing their sister city plan. JRT representatives will discuss and highlight contingency planning issues.*

- Overview of contingency planning at the Federal and Local levels
  - Federal planning efforts and issues
  - Federal laws regarding hazardous material facilities
  - Sister City plans
- Contingency planning issues, including transportation, customs, involvement of industry

**Exercising the JCP with Coast Guard/National Response Center**

*The U.S. National Response Center representatives will discuss lessons learned from previous call-down exercises and exercise the notification aspects of the JCP.*

- Discussion of previous call-downs
- Actual call-down
- Schedule additional exercises



**12:30 - 2:00**

**LUNCH**

**2:00 - 2:30**

**Linking the JRT with other Workgroups under Border 21**

*Efforts and activities of other Workgroups under Border 21 will be presented. JRT representatives will discuss and brainstorm ways to better coordinate and collaborate with these Workgroups in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to gain additional information.*

**2:30 - 5:00**

**JRT Workplan: Update and Future Activities**

*Federal and State Agencies will provide a brief report on their workplan activities. JRT representatives will discuss and finalize workplan activities for 1999 and beyond. The expected outcome of this session is a draft JRT Workplan.*

- Using the framework of the 1997/1998 workplan, presentations on the progress of workplan items.
- Brainstorming session and discussion of proposals for items for the JRT Workplan.

**September 24, 1998**

**9:00 - 10:00 a.m.**

**Environmental Indicators**

*A brief report will be given to the JRT. JRT representatives will then discuss: Whether the environmental indicators are the appropriate indicators/measures for the JRT programs? Whether there other environmental indicators/measures which could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the JRT efforts? What additional information is available to be collected and analyzed in order to track indicator results? The objective of this session is to revise and refine the environmental indicators in order to better reflect the effectiveness of the JRT programs.*

- Description of the environmental indicators
- Report on the progress of collecting information and tracking results
- Discussion of additional methods for collecting and tracking data and/or data sources

**10:00 - 12:00**

**Information Management**

*Reports will be provided by various Agencies on their information management activities.*

- Overview of the data sources that are currently available for contingency planning and emergency response – GIS, Internet sites, U.S. Map, Databases, etc.
- Presentation by DOI - photography along border
- CAMEO (in Spanish and English) and other information management tools



**1:30 - 4:00**

**Outreach/Marketing**

*A brief report to the JRT will highlight efforts to communicate their activities to sister cities and the public. JRT members will discuss ideas for better communications among the various levels of government and to the public. The expected outcome of this session is to create an outline of a outreach/marketing strategy for the JRT.*

- Establishment of outreach strategy for JRT activities and products
  - Report on ideas for outreach activities and materials
  - Brainstorm additional outreach ideas

**4:00 - 5:00**

**Conclusions and Next Steps (including suggestions for next meeting date and place)**