

Superfund Job Training Initiative

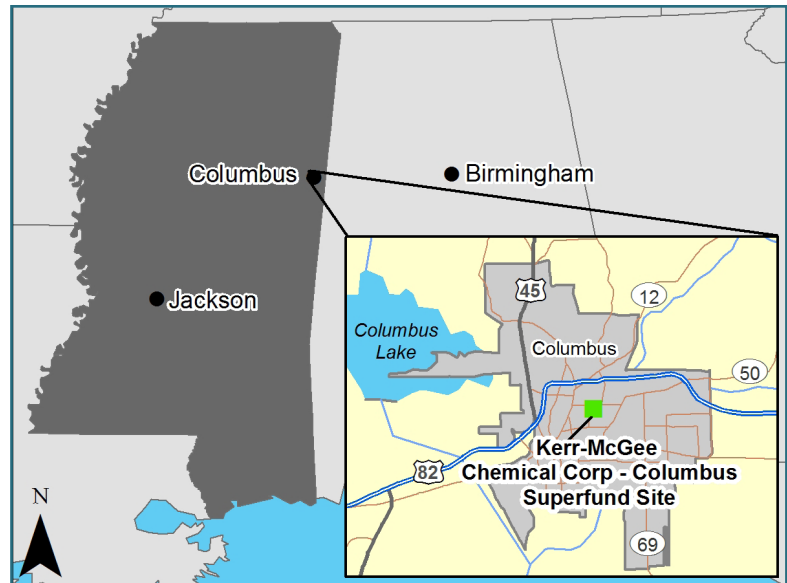


MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT THE KERR-MCGEE CHEMICAL CORP – COLUMBUS SUPERFUND SITE



Introduction

The Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp – Columbus (Kerr-McGee) Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI) is an environmental remediation job readiness program that provided career development opportunities for 16 trainees living near the Kerr-McGee Superfund site in Columbus, Mississippi. Through a partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Memphistown Community Action Group and remedial site contractor J5, Kerr-McGee SuperJTI provided local job seekers with new skills, certifications and hands-on training linked to construction and cleanup. EPA's goal is to help ascertain employment opportunities available for affected communities during the cleanup and redevelopment process, and to provide the workforce development skills needed to take advantage of those opportunities.



A chemical manufacturing facility operated on site from 1928 to 2003. (Map Sources: Esri, DeLorme, AND, Tele Atlas, First American, UNEP-WCMC and USGS.)

Outreach, Recruitment and Screening: September – October 2015

Kerr-McGee SuperJTI, EPA Region 6 and Memphistown Community Action Group program liaison Pastor Darren Leach reached out to the Columbus community by posting flyers, advertising on local radio stations and running ads in local newspapers. Pastor Leach also maintained a SuperJTI hotline to answer questions about the program. SuperJTI, EPA Region 6 and Pastor Leach hosted information sessions on the program at the Genesis Dream Center. In October 2015, 140 people came to the program's six information sessions. Eighty-five people then completed a preliminary testing process. Following these activities, 50 people returned and submitted required documents. Thirty-six people participated in program tryouts. The tryouts included leadership, team-building and role-playing activities, a physical fitness evaluation, and observation by a team of evaluators from the program's partners. Sixteen of the 20 trainees selected during tryouts went on to complete the program.

Training and Job Placement: November 2015

The three-week Kerr-McGee SuperJTI training program took place in Columbus. It included:

Pre-Employment Training: Trainees completed courses on job application best practices, interview preparation, environmental justice, interpersonal communication, building cultural competence and effective work habits. Pastor Darren Leach from Memphistown Community Action Group and EPA contractor Skeo provided the training.

40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) Training: Trainees earned their HAZWOPER certification and learned information on cleanup and safety including toxicology, hazardous material site/spill control containment, and decontamination and isolation. Trainees participated in hands-on training scenarios using equipment and gear. ORM Safety Solutions provided the HAZWOPER training.

CPR/First Aid: Trainees earned their CPR/First Aid certification and learned about topics such as soft tissue injuries, burns, shock, rescue breaths, methods to stop bleeding, CPR and use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and injuries to muscles, bones and joints. The American Red Cross provided the CPR/First Aid training.



Site Background

The 90-acre Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp – Columbus site is located at 300 North 14th Avenue in Columbus, Mississippi. The site includes the area where Kerr-McGee Chemical and its successor, Tronox Incorporated, operated a chemical manufacturing facility from 1928 to 2003. Kerr-McGee made pressure-treated railroad products such as wooden cross ties, switch ties and timbers. Operators used creosote and creosote coal tar solutions to make pressure-treated wood products. They also used pentachlorophenol (PCP) for wood treating from the 1950s until the mid-1970s. These activities resulted in contamination of soil, sediment and groundwater.

Businesses and neighborhoods surround the site. Schools and daycare facilities are also located nearby. EPA placed the site on the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL) in 2011. EPA and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality have taken several steps to protect the public and the environment from contamination. EPA fenced part of the site and removed and replaced contaminated soil. Cleanup of the 14th Avenue Ditch and part of 7th Avenue has finished. Groundwater treatment is ongoing.

Upon completion of the program, trainees were placed into positions on site working with remedial site contractor J5. Through SuperJTI, trainees are provided with the marketable skills needed to begin a successful career in environmental remediation and become valuable members of the workforce in their community.

COMMUNITY PROFILES



Pastor Darren Leach

Pastor Darren Leach served as SuperJTI's community liaison for the Memphistown CAG. With years of experience across community outreach efforts and job readiness and afterschool programs, he understood what needed to happen to make SuperJTI in Columbus a success. Pastor Leach advertised the program in the community and recruited interested applicants. "It was wonderful working through the recruitment process and how well thought-out it was," he recalled. Once training began, Pastor Leach saw the impact of pre-employment skills training on trainees. "The building cultural competence portion [of the training] was amazing, and eye-opening," he said. "It gave the students an opportunity to see themselves as part of a broader picture."

After the training, Pastor Leach worked with SuperJTI staff and remedial site contractor J5 to place graduates in positions on site or in the community. Pastor Leach's work with SuperJTI provided well-suited trainees for the program and employees for J5. "The whole experience was extremely positive for me," he reflected. "SuperJTI gave me an opportunity to meet people that I am still friends with today. It also brought hope to people who really were struggling to find their way at the time. I thought SuperJTI was really, really worthwhile. I would do it again in a heartbeat."



Joshua Thomas

Joshua Thomas had been recently laid off from his job at a nearby steel company when he heard about the SuperJTI program. Intrigued, he went through the application process and was selected to participate. "It was awesome," Joshua said, reflecting on the recruitment and screening process. "There were so many things I never did before to get a job." During the training program, he focused on safety protocols and how to handle dangerous chemicals. The building cultural competence portion of the training also made a lasting impact. "We were taught how to interact with one another based on the different backgrounds we come from," Joshua recalled, "and how to make the world a better place by cleaning up the environment."

After graduating in November 2015, Joshua accepted a position with remedial site contractor J5. "I walked out of the office a happy man," he said. He has been with the company ever since. As a traffic controller, Joshua makes sure that residents can safely access their driveways during cleanup. Looking back, he sees SuperJTI as a watershed moment in his life. "Before I had this training and job, I was getting help from my mom and my dad," Joshua said. "Getting this job meant that I was able to help them out like they had helped me."

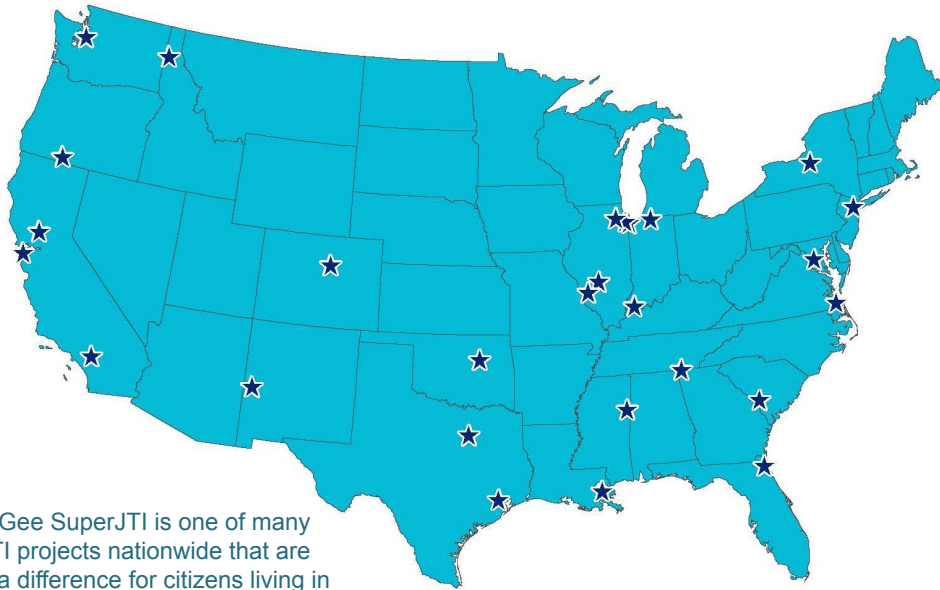


Graduation for the program's 16 trainees took place at the Genesis Dream Center in Columbus in November 2015. Melissa Friedland, one of EPA's SuperJTI National Program Managers, attended the ceremony and addressed the graduates. The ceremony included remarks from program partners as well as the graduates.

KERR-MCGEE SUPERJTI TRAINEES:

Include women and men: Twenty-five percent of the trainees (4 people) are women. Seventy-five percent of the trainees (12 people) are men.

Each received a hard hat, vest and work gloves: The supplies were donated and presented by remedial site contractor J5 at the program graduation ceremony.



Kerr-McGee SuperJTI is one of many SuperJTI projects nationwide that are making a difference for citizens living in communities affected by Superfund sites.



What is the SuperJTI Program?



The Superfund Job Training Initiative, or SuperJTI, supports job readiness programs in communities affected by nearby Superfund sites and encourages the employment of trainees at local site cleanups.

The SuperJTI program combines extensive classroom instruction with hands-on exercises for each participant. Upon completion of the program, each participant possesses the marketable skills required to become a valuable member of the community's workforce.



EPA offers SuperJTI training at no cost to training participants.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:
<https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-job-training-initiative>

Or contact SuperJTI's National Program Managers:

Melissa Friedland
EPA Regions 1-5
(703) 603-8864
friedland.melissa@epa.gov

Viola Cooper
EPA Regions 6-10
(415) 972-3243
cooper.viola@epa.gov

