

Superfund Job Training Initiative

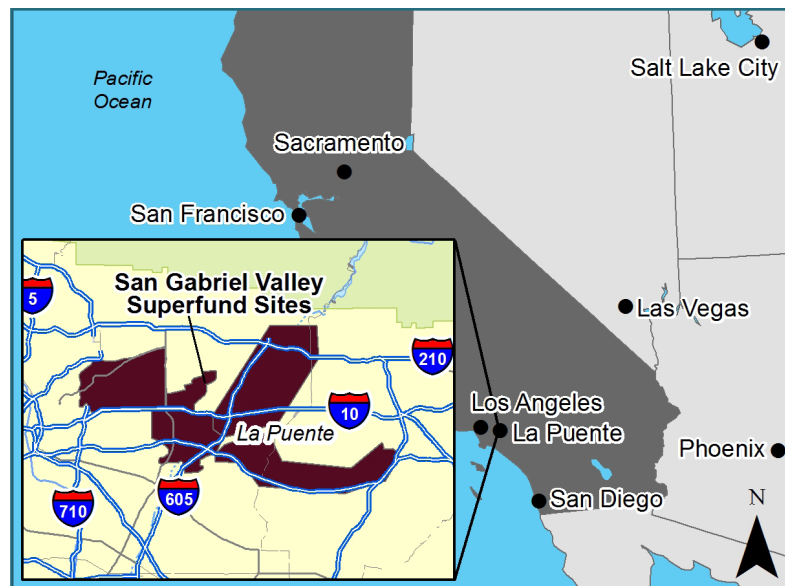


MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY SUPERFUND SITES



Introduction

The San Gabriel Valley Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI) is an environmental remediation job readiness program that provided career development opportunities for 20 trainees living near the San Gabriel Valley Superfund sites in La Puente, California. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) partnered with the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority, City of La Puente, Hacienda La Puente Adult Education, and America's Job Center of California to create the San Gabriel Valley SuperJTI program. This program provided local job seekers with skills, certifications and hands-on training for construction and cleanup. EPA's goal is to provide workforce development skills to local communities so they can take advantage of employment opportunities.



The San Gabriel Valley Superfund sites include areas of contaminated groundwater in southern California. (Map Sources: Esri, DeLorme, AND, Tele Atlas, First American, UNEP-WCMC, USGS and CalEnviroScreen 2.0.)

Outreach, Recruitment and Screening: June – July 2019

San Gabriel Valley SuperJTI and EPA staff reached out to the La Puente community by posting flyers and advertising on area radio stations and in local newspapers. The City of La Puente posted information online and on social media. The San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority, Hacienda La Puente Adult Education and America's Job Center of California also publicized the program to attract interested candidates. SuperJTI staff hosted information sessions about the program in La Puente. In July 2019, over 80 people attended the program's information sessions and 73 completed a preliminary testing process. After these sessions, 42 people returned and submitted required documents. Forty-one 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. Twenty of the 24 trainees selected during tryouts went on to complete the program.

Training and Job Placement: August – November 2019

The 14-week San Gabriel Valley SuperJTI training program took place in La Puente. It included:

Work Readiness Training: Trainees completed courses in environmental justice, interpersonal communication, building cultural competence and effective work habits. EPA contractor Skeo provided the training.

40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) Training: Trainees earned their HAZWOPER certification and learned about cleanup and safety topics such as environmental legislation and standards, toxicology, hazardous material site/spill control and containment, decontamination and isolation. Trainees participated in hands-on training scenarios using actual equipment and protective gear. Environmental Training and Compliance, a local company, provided the training.

CPR/First Aid: Trainees earned their CPR/First Aid certification and learned about topics such as soft tissue injuries, burns, shock, rescue breathing, methods to stop bleeding, blood-borne pathogens, poisoning, CPR, and physical injuries.

Preparation for Water and Distribution I and Treatment I: Trainees learned about topics such as maintenance, laboratory procedures and regulations. The topics covered prepared students to take the California State Water Resources Control Board Water Distribution and Treatment I exam. Hacienda



Site Background

The San Gabriel Valley Superfund sites include four Superfund sites in southern California. The sites include areas of contaminated groundwater in the 170-square-mile San Gabriel Valley. In 1984, EPA placed the four main areas of valley groundwater contamination on the Superfund program's National Priorities List (NPL). The sites include industrial, commercial and residential areas as well as undeveloped land. Over 14 groundwater treatment systems are now operating to protect the primary water supply used by over one million San Gabriel Valley residents.

The Area 4 site (also known as the Puente Valley Operable Unit) is a 23-square-mile sub-area. It includes the Main San Gabriel Basin and the Puente Basin. The site is located mostly in the cities of Industry and La Puente and in some unincorporated parts of eastern Los Angeles County. EPA has planned three groundwater pump-and-treat systems in the Puente Valley Operable Unit to protect the water supply and prevent further movement of contaminants. Initial construction work on the systems began in 2006. EPA anticipates that the three cleanup systems will be fully in place in 2022. Water utilities in the area provide clean water that meets all state and federal drinking water standards.

La Puente Adult Education provided the CPR/First Aid and Water Distribution I and Treatment I training. After the program, SuperJTI provided the graduates' information to San Gabriel Valley Superfund site remedial contractors and area employers to help inform placement efforts.

GRADUATE PROFILES



Norlie Bustalena

After working in the cosmetics industry for nearly a decade, Norlie Bustalena was looking for a change. She sought a career that supported an important cause and provided opportunities for her to tackle new challenges. Norlie found the SuperJTI flyer online and was interested in the range of trainings offered by the program. She was particularly interested in the classes focused on water systems and treatment. “Water is a vital and basic necessity,” she noted. “It will be recycled and relevant for many years to come so I knew there would good opportunities for someone with a background in water.”

As the program started, Norlie appreciated how the trainings, and particularly the work readiness portion of the program, brought SuperJTI participants together. “We came from all kinds of situations and walks of life but we were able to create a bond,” she recalled. SuperJTI trainees would even get together outside of class. “We became like a family,” she said. Since graduation, Norlie has had several interviews where she felt her SuperJTI experience worked in her favor. She is currently pursuing a position related to field services with an engineering firm and hopes to grow her career in the water industry.



Joseph Serna

Joseph Serna came across SuperJTI while looking seeking out new career and educational paths. After attending one of the program’s information sessions, Joseph felt inspired and decided to apply. He found the trainings to be relevant and valuable. “I know from experience that it can be a dog-eat-dog kind of world and the trainings prepared us in ways that would translate not just to water treatment but to a million-dollar company or to a local job,” he said. Joseph also appreciated the topic-specific trainings. “The program opened my eyes to the water distribution and sanitation realm,” he said. Looking forward, Joseph will continue pursuing water certifications in tandem with his other work.

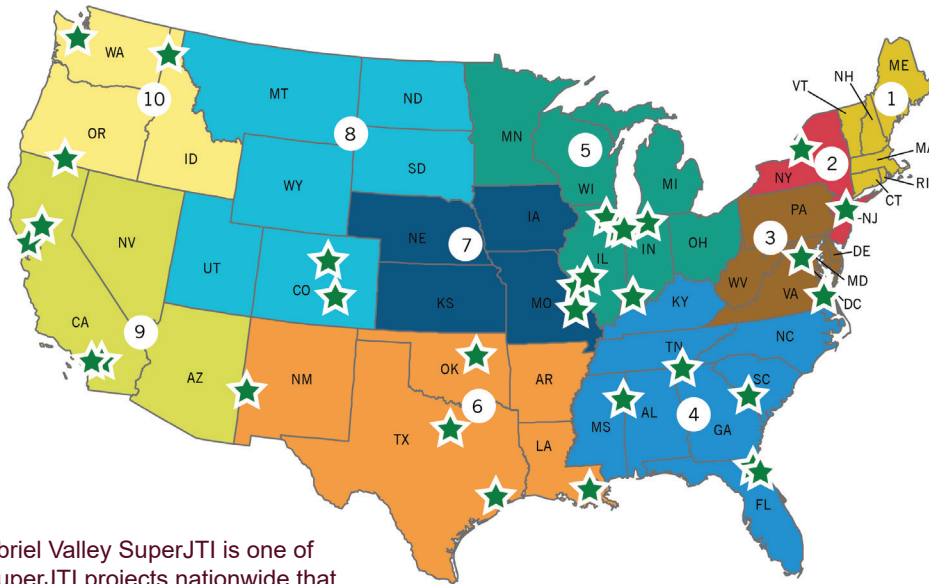
Since graduating, Joseph feels that his SuperJTI experience has helped him obtain several jobs. He worked in a warehouse with a specialized production machine and then moved on to a job with a security company. Joseph explained that the company’s human resources staff saw his commitment to the SuperJTI program and it made him a more attractive candidate for the position. He is now working as a security guard for a private contractor.



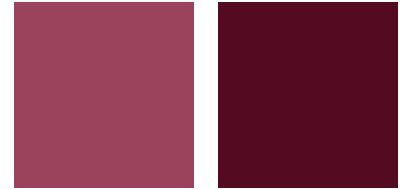
Graduation for the program’s 20 trainees took place in Baldwin Park, California, in December 2019. EPA Region 9 Superfund remedial project manager Ray Chavira and SuperJTI’s national program manager Viola Cooper attended and spoke at the ceremony. The ceremony included remarks from program partners as well as the graduates.

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY SUPERJTI TRAINEES

Live on or near the San Gabriel Valley site: Sixty-five percent of the trainees (13 people) live in the San Gabriel Valley. The remaining seven trainees live in neighboring areas.



San Gabriel Valley 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 Manager:

Devon Martin
 (703) 603-7187
 martin.devon@epa.gov

