



# Going Door to Door

## Overview

There are times when community involvement coordinators (CICs) may need to go door to door to convey or obtain information from community members. CICs may go door to door to inform residents about a nearby cleanup, distribute information, obtain access agreements to sample indoor air quality or collect drinking water or soil samples from their properties, or conduct informal [community interviews](#) to better understand the community's point of view on the site. CICs also may visit commercial and business properties so they are aware of site-related issues that may affect business operations.

## Why This Is Important

This activity is important because it allows a CIC to convey or obtain information from community members and ensures that information gets to community members in a timely manner. Going door to door is most useful when you want to:

- Introduce yourself or members of the site team to residents.
- Invite residents to an event and explain why it is important to attend.
- Provide information about the site and upcoming activities.
- Inform residents and business owners about site activities, such as the installation of wells or other infrastructure related to the cleanup that could disturb the neighborhood.
- Obtain access agreements for sampling or cleanup work inside and/or outside residential or commercial properties.
- Reach out to hard-to-reach members of the community.
- Gather information about community needs, expectations, or concerns. However, be mindful of Paperwork Reduction Act limitations on collecting information or conducting surveys.

Going door to door in a neighborhood may be appropriate when you:

- Have a simple message that can be conveyed quickly.

*This and all tools in the Community Involvement Toolkit should be used in conjunction with the [Community Involvement Handbook](#), which provides guidance to EPA staff on how EPA typically plans and implements community involvement activities at Superfund sites.*

- Want to informally gather a small amount of non-sensitive and non-controversial information.
- Need to disseminate information personally and quickly to residents of a small area or neighborhood.

Going door to door may be less effective when you have complex information to convey or you need to spend more than a few minutes with each resident. If it is critical to reach every household personally or to talk with a specific member of each household, it may be more appropriate to schedule more formal visits.

## Implementation

### Preparing to Go Door to Door

Before heading out into the neighborhood to knock on doors, you need to do some homework:

- **Consider working with community groups that are already engaged** with the community about environmental issues or the specific site.
- **Consider advising local officials about your plans** to go door to door in a neighborhood. In some municipalities, you may want to talk to the mayor and/or city manager. In other places, you might want to talk to county board members, commissioners, or ward chairs.
- **Talk to the police department and/or fire department.** They likely will be able to give you safety guidelines. The police department also might send an occasional patrol car to the area to check on your safety. Advance consultation can help protect you and save you embarrassing encounters with public officials.
- **Work when people will be home.** Ideally, it is better to work during late afternoon and the





non-dinner-hour portion of the evening or on weekends, when residents are more likely to be home. Be courteous of observed dinner times in the neighborhood.

- **Decide what you want to say and how you want to say it.** Prepare necessary information and handouts. Map a route and learn as much as possible about the people you are planning to visit.
- **Work with your existing community contacts ahead of time** to learn as much as you can about the neighborhood and the residents you plan to visit. Determine whether you are likely to need an interpreter to talk with residents with limited English proficiency. You also might want to walk or drive the route in advance so you are aware of any safety issues (e.g., aggressive dogs) before heading out to talk to the community.
- **Let people know in advance of your plans to visit them**, if possible, and your reasons for doing so. Be aware that people can be suspicious or fearful of people who approach their homes uninvited or unannounced. You can announce your visit in a press release or desk statement (see Attachment 1), via a mass email sent to community listservs (see Attachment 2), through robocalls to community members (see Attachment 3), on community websites, with postcards sent to residents' houses, or through neighborhood organizations or churches. You also can encourage residents to let their neighbors know that EPA will be visiting. Word of mouth, texting, Facebook, and social media also are effective ways to inform people of an upcoming neighborhood canvass.
- **Prepare a fact sheet or other handout** with basic information or Frequently Asked Questions to distribute to the residents during your visits. If languages other than English are spoken in the neighborhood, consider having this document translated, and leave both English and translated versions when you are in doubt.
- **If you are seeking authorization or signatures from property owners**, offer to leave a copy of your information and signature forms with them, and leave a postage paid envelope so they can mail it to you.
- **Take clipboards and pens with you** so you can more easily obtain signatures, if that is your reason for going door to door.

## Things to Consider When Going Door to Door

People may be reluctant to answer the door because they do not want to be subject to a sales pitch or recruited to a cause. Keep in mind that you are interrupting whatever they are doing at the time, so you must be able to put them at ease in just a few seconds.

When introducing yourself, inform residents — in the first sentence — who you are, why you are there, and how much of their time you are requesting.

While many neighbors will have the whole conversation with you on their front porch, some neighbors may be more comfortable talking inside their homes. If they invite you in and it seems reasonable and safe to do so, take them up on their offer.

Be sure to carry your business card and show your EPA ID when introducing yourself at the door. Your supervisor should be advised of your planned canvassing schedule, and periodic check-in phone calls are recommended. Unless you will be visiting the home again, let residents know that this is the only time someone from EPA will be at their door, to ensure that others do not try to gain access to homes under false pretenses.

Visiting each household in teams of two can be particularly effective. This can provide a sense of security for you, especially if you are invited inside. Sometimes a team may want to split up to expedite the work. Under such circumstances, the team should work the same street, perhaps on opposite sides. Try to keep as much visual contact with each other as possible and set scheduled times when you will meet. All team members should have each other's cell phone numbers.

Provide residents with a handout or [\*fact sheet\*](#) that easily explains the purpose of your visit (see Attachment 4). You also can refer people to a website for additional information or provide a handout with a quick response (QR) code that the person you are visiting can scan with a mobile device to view an EPA webpage to verify your visit is legitimate.

Take copies of a "Sorry we missed you!" flyer to leave on doors of residents who are not home or did not answer. The flyer explains the purpose of your visit and provides contact information where residents can



reach you if they would like to set up a time to meet (See Attachment 5).

## Tips

- Learn more about a community before going door to door, e.g., interpreter needs for community members who speak languages other than English, safety issues.
- Consider working with a local fire department or elected official who can make robocalls to community members to inform them in advance about your visit.
- Dress professionally but not too formally. Consider wearing a jacket or polo shirt with the EPA logo to make yourself more identifiable.
- Be cautious when approaching a yard with a fence and try to determine whether a dog is present before entering.
- Do not enter yards if signs such as “no trespassing” or “dog on guard” are posted.
- Be friendly, introduce yourself, and shake hands, if appropriate. Be respectful of the person’s time and make each visit short.
- If nobody answers the door, leave your fact sheet or “sorry we missed you” flyer. Consider using

clear plastic bags designed as door-hangers (with EPA’s logo). Do not leave things in the mailbox.

- Document as much as you can, including phone numbers and email addresses of residents, so you can follow up with any additional questions you may have.
- Persistence pays off. Keep returning if you must speak to a spouse, parent, or property owner. Try to obtain owner contact information if the owner is absent; then call the owner and make arrangements to visit.

## Attachments

- Attachment 1: *Example of a Desk Statement Explaining When and Why EPA Plans to Visit Residents*
- Attachment 2: *Example of an Email Message Explaining When and Why EPA Plans to Visit Residents*
- Attachment 3: *Example of a Robocall Statement*
- Attachment 4: *Example of a Fact Sheet for a Door to Door Visit*
- Attachment 5: *Example of a “Sorry we missed you!” Flyer*



## ATTACHMENT 1: Example of a Desk Statement Explaining When and Why EPA Plans to Visit Residents

### **DESK STATEMENT - Blue Ridge Plating Company Removal Action in Arden, NC**

Contractors for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified a small, one-gallon container of suspected perchloric acid while removing hazardous materials at the Blue Ridge Plating Company site in Arden, N.C., on Dec. 9. Under some circumstances it may act as an oxidizer and present an explosion hazard. EPA notified the Asheville Fire Department and the Asheville Bomb Squad, and met with city officials on Dec. 10 to develop a strategy to safely deal with the situation. On Sunday, the Asheville Bomb Squad will send a robot into the laboratory where the perchloric acid container is stored to prepare it for removal and neutralization. EPA will conduct air monitoring throughout to ensure the safety of the surrounding community. On Saturday, EPA and the Asheville Fire Department will notify residents and businesses within a quarter-mile radius of the planned activities.

More information about EPA's cleanup at the Blue Ridge Plating Company site: [Site URL]



## ATTACHMENT 2: Example of an Email Message Explaining When and Why EPA Plans to Visit Residents

Subject: Donna Reservoir NPL Site

In 1993, it was discovered that fish from the Donna Reservoir and Canal System (Donna, Texas) were contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs were once used in electrical equipment and for other industrial purposes until 1977. PCBs, which are colorless and odorless, could cause harm to humans and wildlife.

Because eating fish that contain high levels of PCBs may affect human health, in 1994 the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) declared it illegal to possess any fish that come from the Donna Reservoir and Canal System.

It has been brought to the attention of DSHS that fishermen continue to catch and keep fish from the Donna Reservoir and Canal System. In addition, DSHS has been informed that these fishermen may be selling the contaminated fish to local restaurants.

Personnel from DSHS, working with staff from the local health departments, will be visiting with restaurant managers/owners in the Donna & Alamo area June 3rd - 5th. We will be informing the restaurants that both state and federal law prohibits the purchasing of food (fish) from an unapproved source.

Attached is the information that we will be providing (in English & Spanish). Please forward this information as needed. If you have any questions, please contact Jane Doe, XXX-XXX-XXXX and/or doe.jane@email.gov.





### ATTACHMENT 3: Example of a Robocall Statement

During a time-critical removal at the Blue Ridge Plating Company site, a container labeled perchloric acid was found. This chemical can become shock sensitive. To be protective, EPA plans to stabilize the contents of the container on site Sunday morning with the assistance of the Asheville Fire Department. EPA will conduct air monitoring throughout to ensure the safety of the surrounding community. If you have any questions please call Angela Miller at XXX-XXX-XXXX.



## ATTACHMENT 4: Example of a Fact Sheet for a Door to Door Visit



### FACT SHEET

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Blue Ridge Plating Company – Removal Action  
Arden, Buncombe County, North Carolina

No. 1

December 20XX

*The Site information sheet summarizes the history of the Site, present Site status, and future activities planned for the Site.*

#### **Contact Information**

**Angela R. Miller**  
EPA Community  
Involvement  
Coordinator  
XXX-XXX-XXXX

**Ken Rham**  
EPA Federal  
On-Scene  
Coordinator  
XXX-XXX-XXXX

#### **SITE HISTORY**

The Blue Ridge Plating Company site is a former plating facility that used black oxide, cadmium, chromium, copper, cyanide, tin and zinc in electroplating processes. The facility operated from 1974 to 2014.

The Site was added to the Superfund National Priorities List in September 2005, and was cleaned up by EPA in 2007. The cleanup involved removing approximately 8,700 cubic yards of contaminated soil. EPA continues to periodically monitor the groundwater. At the time of the cleanup, the facility was still operating and the former process building was not included.

After operations ceased, an inspection of the facility identified leaking and unlabeled containers that still remained in the building. The building is in disrepair and has been declared unsafe by the City of Asheville.

#### **REMOVAL ACTION**

EPA is conducting a time-critical removal at the former processing building. During a Site visit, EPA observed structural damage to the roof and walls, which could permit hazardous substance releases. While characterizing some materials in the building, a container labeled perchloric acid was found. This chemical can become shock sensitive and could possibly be a danger. To be protective, EPA plans to stabilize the contents of the container on site Sunday morning approximately 9am with the assistance of the Asheville Fire Department and the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI). EPA will conduct air monitoring throughout to ensure the safety of the surrounding community.

Once the chemical is stabilized, EPA will continue to conduct additional sampling as needed in order to characterize materials for disposal or recycle; repackaging containers, as needed, to safely and properly ship materials off-site; assess the building for asbestos and remove it if found prior to demolishing the building, then will transport and dispose of construction debris. Removal activities are anticipated to be completed by the end of January 20XX.





## ATTACHMENT 5: Example of a “Sorry we missed you!” Flyer



### **We are sorry we missed you!**

Staff from the Texas Department of State Health Services are in your neighborhood July 10-12 to talk with residents of the Circle Court area. The purpose is to inform residents that trichloroethene has been identified in the local groundwater. Part of the Texas Department of State Health Services site assessment is to gather residential information as well as any concerns there may be related to the contamination. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed the Circle Court area as a Superfund site because of the groundwater contamination.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality collected water samples from the public water supply system and residential homes. In these samples it was discovered that TCE levels exceeded the EPA maximum contamination level for public drinking water systems.

If you would be willing to visit with us, either in person or by telephone, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX during July 10-12, 20XX. We will check messages throughout the day and will return your call as soon as possible. Please let us know the best time to contact you as well as a phone number where you can be reached.

Texas Department of State Health Services  
Health Assessment and Toxicology Group, MC 1964  
PO Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347  
1-800-XXX-XXXX