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Office of Solid Waste and
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Superfund Today

Focus On the Community Advisory Group Program

What Do YOU Think About The Hazardous Waste Site In Your Neighborhood?

My kids played around that site every afternoon! Are they going to be okay?

Am I going to have to close my store?

We just bought a house here. Will the pollution drive down property values?



We need jobs! Who's going to do business here now?

Voice Your Concerns Through Community Advisory Groups

Dangerous wastes have been discovered in your town. You have questions that you want answered, as well as opinions that you want EPA to hear. EPA is proposing plans for cleanup—plans you want to know more about. Where do you go to express your concerns? How can you ensure that EPA hears you and considers your views?

Other residents with concerns like yours have successfully participated in decision-making about the hazardous wastes sites in their neighborhoods. You can, too. In fact, EPA is committed to getting your ideas and knowledge into its plans. One way to strengthen your voice is to form a Community Advisory Group and work together to address site issues and concerns. Community Advisory Groups allow communities to play active roles in site decisions by encouraging direct and regular conversations with EPA.

EPA wants to ensure that citizens, particularly minorities, low-income residents, and new im-

migrants, are heard. Community Advisory Groups help communities get recognition, guidance and other support that will put them in partnership with EPA. Community Advisory Groups are designed to meet the needs of all community members, and to play an important role in bringing these voices to EPA's attention.



How to Get Your Community

1 Get Started

Start early to make your voice heard in cleanup decisions. Discuss your concerns about the hazardous waste site in your town with family, neighbors, local businesses, and other community members. Call EPA to find out what's going on at the site. Plan a neighborhood meeting to discuss what EPA has told you. Right away, you have the beginnings of a Community Advisory Group. EPA may be able to help you start your Community Advisory Group by organizing a kick-off Community Advisory Group information meeting to inform the community of the possibility of such a group.



✓*Helpful Hint:* Be sure to contact EPA when setting up your Community Advisory Group—they have resources and ideas to help your Community Advisory Group become a voice for your community. You could use an existing community group (e.g., a local club) as the foundation for starting your Community Advisory Group.

3 Get the Information

You can learn about hazardous waste contamination, methods for cleaning it up, and how to interpret and respond to technical information on your Superfund site through various means. You might read about the site at your local library. Perhaps EPA can provide a guided tour of the site. If English isn't your neighborhood's primary language, EPA may be able to provide someone who can translate site information into your native tongue. EPA may also be able to provide training on environmental topics and on working together effectively.

✓*Helpful Hint:* Contact the EPA

2 Build a Team

Anyone affected by a hazardous waste site can join a Community Advisory Group. Members participate in Community Advisory Group meetings, review site information, comment on site decisions, and share information with the community. EPA recognizes Community Advisory Groups that reflect the make-up and various interests of the community—after all, cleanup decisions at the site can affect citizens, businesses, local government, and other sections of the community. While Community Advisory Groups can be any size, they generally average around 20 members. At least half should be residents who live near the site. The other half might be

made up of the medical community, local government, or real estate representatives. EPA encourages joining together with other groups such as local business owners, neighborhood professionals, community organizers, as well as people who do not live near the site, but could be affected by it, to strengthen and give credibility to your Community Advisory Group's voice.

✓*Helpful Hint:* Remember, a Community Advisory Group must be made up of community members who have a direct, personal interest in the site—outside people or groups can only be involved if they are helping you with your Community Advisory Group work.



Advisory Group Up and Running



Community Involvement Coordinator at your site about your training needs.



Pull Together

Elect a chairperson, set up a meeting structure, and agree on the goals you want to achieve. Get continual feedback from residents. Does your community want to use the cleaned up site for manufacturing? Could it be a parking lot to stimulate local shopping? Or a basketball court? Keeping residents' goals in mind, you will be able to work in your community's best interest. Your Community Advisory Group should meet regularly, and the community at large should be invited to these meetings.

✓ *Helpful Hint: Concerned about money or services? EPA may be able to help by providing mailing services and postage, preparing and placing public notices, copying site-related documents, and more.*



Make A Difference

EPA is committed to bringing all players to the table from the beginning—and then working together toward the common goal of cleaning up the site. EPA must and will listen to your opinions and recommendations about the hazardous waste site in your community. Community Advisory Groups promote effective two-way communication between Superfund professionals and community residents—ensuring that everyone has the chance to share his or her ideas and concerns. This is an important and sensitive job that calls for dedication and hard work. Consider this—if you don't participate, who will? You can make a tremendous difference on community environmental decisions.



A Community Advisory Group In Action

South Carolina Residents Take Charge

After years of living near the Carolawn, Inc. Superfund site, Chester County residents recently joined forces to form a Superfund site Community Advisory Group. The Community Advisory Group was established to make sure that community concerns about the ongoing cleanup of this site are addressed by EPA, State, and responsible parties. They have chosen to become the Carolawn Site Community Advisory Board (CAB). With EPA's assistance, they have become the voice of a community worried about its future health and welfare.

The Carolawn Superfund site is an abandoned waste storage and disposal facility located near Fort Lawn in Chester County, South Carolina. Thousands of drums of wastes were stored or buried at the site. Many leaked into the soil, surface water, and groundwater—putting nearby residents at risk. In the early 1980s, EPA began to remove the contaminated soils, drums, and liquid waste, and provided

alternate drinking water supply to nearby residents. Later, after responsible parties completed the remedial design to deal with the contaminated groundwater at the site, residents were concerned about the proposed change in the treated water discharge alternative that was being

“I would like to see EPA appoint a committee from the community to work with them...I'd like the community to be involved, then we wouldn't have to be wondering what EPA was doing.”

Barnette Nichols, CAB Member

proposed. The community banded together, over 300 strong, in January 1995 to show EPA, local officials and responsible parties their opposition to the discharge of untreated contaminated groundwater to the local sewer line.

The community group's efforts worked. The ground water treatment system is currently under construction; treated water will be discharged to a nearby creek. The CAB is monitoring the progress, but remains concerned that soil just outside the immediate site boundaries may also be contaminated. The group will be gathering additional information regarding any possible disposal activities that may have occurred on the additional land.

Interest in the Carolawn CAB has reached far and wide. South Carolina U.S. Representative John M. Spratt, Jr. played a very active role in setting up the CAB. Also, an EPA Superfund Remedial Section Chief, Jan Rogers, sees the CAB as “a group that fairly represents the entire community's interest, that continues to conduct an ongoing dialogue with the Agency...” Bottom line, residents near the Carolawn site are using the power of the CAB to keep the cleanup of Carolawn at the forefront of peoples' attention.

Concerned About the Carolawn Superfund Site?

Meetings of the Carolawn CAB are held on a quarterly basis. Come by and receive up-to-date information on the status of the construction of the ground water treatment system as well as discussions of other issues and concerns regarding the site. Please call our CAB Chairman, Davis White, Sr. locally, or our EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, Cynthia Peurifoy, at 1-800-435-9233 or (404) 347-7791 x.2072, for dates, times, and locations of our meetings, or if you have any questions, comments or ideas. You can also get information on the CAB and the Carolawn site at our local libraries—Lancaster County Library and Chester County Library. Remember, the Carolawn CAB is the best way to have your say about the site. Take this opportunity—you can make a difference!

For More Information About Community Advisory Groups...

- ✓ Call the Superfund Information Hotline at **1-800-424-9346**.
- ✓ Visit the Superfund Homepage at **<http://www.epa.gov/superfund>**.
- ✓ Read *Guidance for Community Groups at Superfund Sites* (EPA 540-K-96-001).