



# Publishing Effective Public Notices

Office of Emergency and Remedial Response  
Community Involvement and Outreach Center

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

Publishing public notices is one of the methods the Superfund Community Involvement program uses to announce public events (*e.g.*, public meetings, availability sessions) and to inform communities about cleanup activities at Superfund sites. *Community Relations in Superfund: A Handbook* (EPA 540-R-92-009) identifies the milestones in the Superfund process that require a public notice. This fact sheet offers suggestions to improve EPA's efforts to produce easily understood public notices.

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## Getting Noticed

The purpose of a public notice is to inform an affected Superfund community about a planned event. If the public notice is ignored or misunderstood, EPA fails to communicate an important message.

While publishing "Legal Notices" or "Government Notices" in the classified advertisements section of the paper fulfills the legal requirements, larger, well-placed notices are more likely to be read because they stand out amidst all the competing information on a newspaper page.

- If your budget permits, publish public notices as large display advertisements in a newspaper read by the community members you want to reach. (Region 3 has informal guidelines that all public notices should be at least one-quarter-page display ads.)
- Choose a good location in the paper for your notice. The sports, local news, or TV listings sections are well-read.
- Remember that the appearance—not just the message—of the notice is important. Examples of readable, pleasant-looking notices are presented throughout this fact sheet.

## Getting Noticed, *continued*



Advertising research indicates that consumers need to be exposed to an advertising message at least three times within about a month for it to be effective.

- If your budget allows, run the ad more than once—*e.g.*, ten days before, one week before, and one day before the announced event.
- Use a consistent format for your public notices and include the EPA logo so your notices will be recognizable at a glance.
- Break up long blocks of text for easy reading: use brief paragraphs, bullets, indents, blank lines, or subheadings to organize the information.
- Incorporate generous amounts of white space into your design.
- Do not mix more than three different typefaces in one notice.
- Typefaces of 10 to 11 points are the most readable for the body text of the notice.
- Avoid excessive use of ALL CAPITALS, **boldface**, or *italics* for long runs of text.
- Avoid placing text over illustrations or tinted areas.



**Be sure to attend the scoping meeting for the new Stoneybrook Flats Cleanup Agreement.**

A new Stoneybrook Flats Cleanup Agreement currently is being evaluated. The U.S. EPA and Colorado Department of Health invite you to attend a meeting to discuss the agreement and make comments.

Public Meeting  
**8:00pm - 9:30pm**  
**Tuesday, October 1, 1996**  
**The Clearwater Hyatt**  
**8338 Cliff Ridge Rd.**  
**Clearwater, Colorado**

For more information, contact Mary Warden  
U.S. EPA Community Involvement  
(302) 555-1212



## When to Publish a Public Notice

Following are some of the key points in the CERCLA process for which a public notice is required or appropriate.

**EPA must publish a notice in a major newspaper when:**

- the engineering evaluation/cost analysis becomes available
- the proposed plan becomes available
- the response action has been selected and the Record of Decision signed
- an enforcement agreement is embodied in a consent decree
- a remedial action is taken or a settlement or consent decree entered into that differs significantly from the final remedial plan adopted by the agency
- the notice of intent to delete a site from the NPL is announced in the *Federal Register*



### Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announces the availability of the EE/CA for the Folkton Property Superfund site. A meeting is planned to discuss the report.

**Public Meeting**  
 Monday, November 18, 1996  
 6:30pm - 8:30pm  
 Bldg. 5, Room 110  
 Wolburn State College  
 2233 Lindberg Avenue  
 Wolburn, Montana

After the meeting there will be an open forum for additional community input. The EE/CA will be available for review at the Folkton Property Information Repository at the Wolburn Public Library, 213 Martins Road, Wolburn.

For further information, contact  
 Joseph Summers  
 U.S. EPA Community Involvement  
 1-800-555-1212



This sample is shown at two-thirds recommended size

## Take the Time

**Public Comment Period Begins on the Proposed Shelby Industrial Area Interim Remedial Action Decision Document.**

A 60-day public comment period has been established running from January 29, 1997 through March 27, 1997. The public comment period is your opportunity to provide information or raise an issue on the Remedial Action for the Shelby site.

Throughout the comment period, written comments may be submitted to: Margaret Sherlow, Community Involvement Staff, U.S. EPA, 355 N. Globe Road, Greenleaf, MO 34412.

For further information, contact Joseph Summers  
 U.S. EPA Community Involvement  
 1-800-555-1212

This sample is shown at two-thirds recommended size

**EPA may inform the public:**

- when the administrative record file becomes available (in addition, EPA **must** inform the public when the information repository becomes available)
- at the beginning of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)
- for emergency response actions
- at the beginning of an operable unit
- for a RI/FS public “kickoff” meeting
- for the availability of an engineering design fact sheet
- before other public meetings
- at other appropriate times

**EPA must publish in the *Federal Register* when:**

- an enforcement agreement is embodied in a consent decree
- an enforcement agreement is entered into with *de minimis* parties
- an enforcement agreement is entered into for cost recovery
- a notice of intent to delete a site from the NPL is issued



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) announces its intent to remove the Handel Bridge Superfund site from the National Priorities List (NPL). The U.S. EPA completed cleanup activities at the site and determined that no further cleanup action is needed to protect human health and the environment. The public is invited to comment on this proposed decision. Written and oral comments must be submitted no later than August 21, and should be directed to:

**Beth Windsor**  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604  
(312) 555-1234

To obtain more information about the Handel Bridge Superfund site, visit the Information Repository at Handel Regional Library, 3344 Handel Bridge Road, Handel, IL.

**WE'RE  
PLANTING THE  
SEEDS OF  
CHANGE AT THE  
SMITH DUMP  
SUPERFUND  
SITE.**



Although it's an environment of change, the mission and priorities remain the same. At this month's public information meeting we will discuss:

- Smith Dump Cleanup Agreement Update
- Operable Unit #4 Update
- Environmental Impact Statement
- RCRA Permit Modification

**Please join us:**  
**Monday, September 13, 1996**  
**7:00pm - 9:00pm**  
**Midville Holiday Inn**  
**1414 N. Chester Dr.**  
**Midville, Mississippi**

**For more information, contact Joe Jones,**  
**U.S. EPA Community Involvement,**  
**(303) 555-1234.**



## Choosing the Right Medium for a Public Notice

- Run the public notice as an advertisement in local weekly newspapers or community shoppers' guides.
- Publish the notice in bulletins put out by churches or civic organizations.
- Publish the notice on the Internet as an "upcoming event" on your World Wide Web home page.

- Mail the public notice to homes and local organizations on the site mailing list.
- Distribute the public notice as a press advisory to local print media, radio, and TV.
- Consult with local leaders for suggestions on the most effective publications in which to place public notices.

The law requires that most public notices be published in a major local newspaper of general circulation, however many members of small communities may not read the large city dailies. City newspapers usually appeal to broad segments of the population, rather than smaller communities or specialized groups. Therefore, other

publications, in addition to large daily newspapers, also should be considered. Most communities

have their own local papers that may be more widely read locally than the major daily. This is especially true of non-English-speaking communities. The boxes above offer some suggestions for reaching your intended audience.



*Announce it on the Internet!*

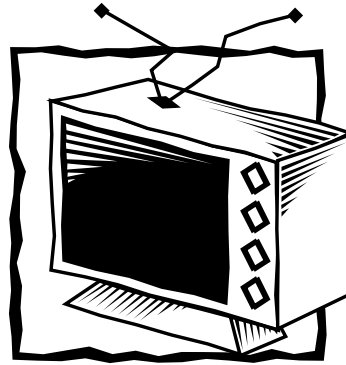
*Publish it!*

*Post it!*

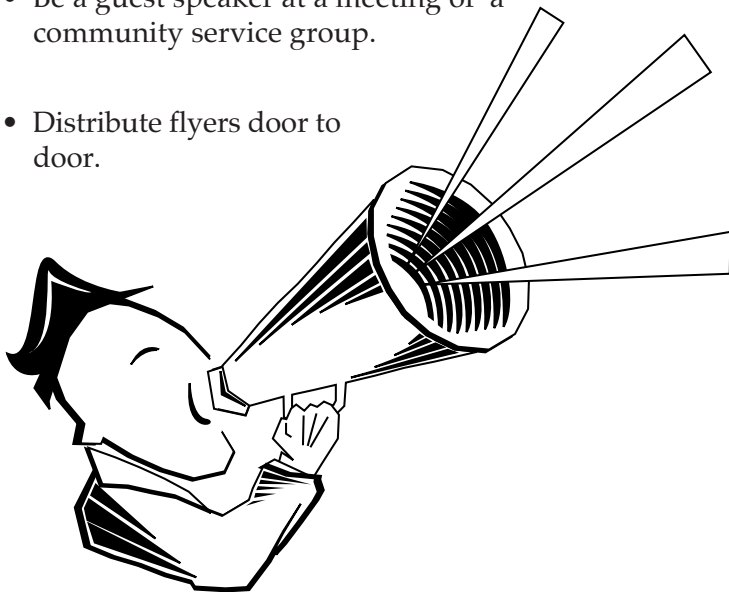
*Fax it!*

*Mail it out!*

*Talk about it!*



- Make use of local radio and TV public service announcements.
- Give an interview on a local radio station.
- Be a guest speaker at a meeting of a community service group.
- Distribute flyers door to door.
- Telephone the key individuals in a community to inform them about the information in the notice.
- Post flyers or posters on bulletin boards at the site, and at local stores, banks, libraries, post offices, community centers, schools, or in store windows. Gear the poster to the particular audience—especially non-English speaking groups.



- Make use of any assistance that community service organizations might offer.

This document provides guidance to EPA staff. This document is not a substitute for EPA's statutes and regulations, nor is it a regulation itself. Thus, it cannot impose legally-binding requirements on EPA, states, or the regulated community, and may not apply to a given situation. EPA may change this guidance in the future.

## Using an Effective Writing Style



Information for the general public should be written so that all citizens can read and understand the issues presented in the document.

Public notices should use clear, simple language. For example:

- Use simple, nontechnical words. A message containing an average of 1.5 syllables per word is considered very readable. (Lincoln's Gettysburg Address consisted of 267 words, of which 202 had only one syllable.)
- Be specific about what you want the reader to do (*e.g.*, attend a meeting, request a document, or provide comments).
- Keep the notice as short as possible. Not only do you have a better chance of keeping the reader's attention, but short ads are less expensive than long ones.
- Avoid technical details, acronyms, and legal jargon.
- Clearly state the date and location of an event and the name and phone number of the contact person.

## Record of Decision for Logan Farm Superfund Site

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announces a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Logan Farm Superfund Site. The ROD documents EPA's cleanup plan for groundwater contamination at the site, including pumping and treating the contaminated groundwater and monitoring all private wells nearby.

**Copies of the ROD are available at the:**  
Norville Public Library  
904 S. Seventh Street  
Norville, CO 12334

**For more information on the site, contact:**

Sue Welk, Community Relations Coordinator, Office of Public Affairs, U.S. EPA, (312) 555-1234





### Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announces the availability of the EE/CA for the Folklon Property Superfund site. A meeting is planned to discuss the report.

**Public Meeting**  
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6:30pm - 8:30pm  
Bldg. 5, Room 110  
Wolburn State College  
2233 Lindberg Avenue  
Wolburn, Montana

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For further information, contact  
Joseph Summers  
U.S. EPA Community Involvement  
1-800-555-1212



### WE'RE PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE AT THE SMITH DUMP SUPERFUND SITE.



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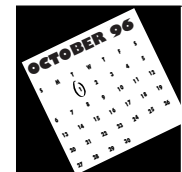
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United States  
Environmental Protection Agency (5204G)  
Washington, DC 20460

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use  
\$300



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8338 Cliff Ridge Rd.  
Clearwater, Colorado

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◆	The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announces the beginning of the comment period on the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) and Proposed Plan for the Handel Bridge Superfund Site.
◆	<b>Public Meeting</b> Tuesday, December 3, 1996 7:00pm to 9:00pm Collingwood Marriott 1313 S. Remar Road Barton, Michigan
◆	Tentative topics for the meeting include: • Content of the RI/FS • Content of the Proposed Plan • Procedure for providing comment • Next steps at the site
◆	For more information about these and other topics, contact Beth Windsor, U.S. EPA, (603) 555-1212.

