

Spokesperson

DESCRIPTION

The spokesperson is responsible for addressing citizen concerns, answering their questions, and responding to inquiries from the *Media* about a Superfund site. The spokesperson is usually the CIC. The spokesperson is usually not the Remedial Project Manager (RPM) or On-Scene Coordinator (OSC).



[See Media, Tab 25](#)

REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

Yes. The NCP, at 40 CFR § 300.415(n)(1), requires EPA to designate a spokesperson to inform the community of actions taken, respond to inquiries, and provide information concerning the release.

MAKING IT WORK

A spokesperson is knowledgeable about the site and current site actions, willing to explain cleanup policies and procedures, in-tune with community concerns, and accessible to the public.

The spokesperson has the opportunity to establish a strong foundation with the public, usually before any other representative of EPA. However, when an issue arises that requires more specialized information, the spokesperson should direct the audience to the most appropriate contact.

When a spokesperson is assigned, it is important that the spokesperson:

- *Send out a news release.* Announce who the contact person will be through local newspapers, radio and television stations. This will give the public a direct link to the events of the cleanup before they get underway;
- *Inform all Agency staff members.* For those involved with the cleanup, inform them of the spokesperson for that site in case they are approached by someone looking for information pertaining to that site; and
- *Keep a log book.* Record all of citizen requests and how each was handled to ensure that incoming requests are not forgotten.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: PUTTING A CONSISTENT FACE FORWARD

At one site, a barrage of inquiries started pouring in from local newspapers, radio, and TV stations. However, stakeholders did not know who the spokesperson for the site was, and so the media tried everyone they could think of to get information. As a result, information given to the media was inconsistent. If the CIC had made it known from the beginning that he or she was the spokesperson, activities at the site would have been better communicated.

EXAMPLE 2: THE RIGHT RESOURCES

A parent was concerned about the removal process at a site near a park where children played. This parent wanted to know exactly what was to be done and if the children were in any danger of being exposed to hazardous materials. The CIC was contacted and answered the questions as accurately as possible. The CIC referred the parent to the RPM and gave the parent a list of other contacts.

Last Updated:
September 2002

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[See Frequently Asked Questions/Referrals, Tab 18](#)



Tips

- *Be personable.* Many *Frequently Asked Questions* will be raised, and each time you answer, remember to be as respectful as the first time you responded.
- *Have a second in command.* If you know that your availability to the public is limited, have a second or even third contact person to help field questions regarding the site.

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCE IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Frequently Asked Questions, Tab 18](#)
- [Media, Tab 25](#)

OUTSIDE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Covello, Vincent; Donovan, Erin; and Slavick, John, eds. “Dos and Don’ts for Spokespersons.” *Risk Communication Student Manual*. Washington, DC: Chemical Manufacturers Association, 1989.