



Efficient and Effective Community and Stakeholder Engagement at Superfund Sites

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Background/Objectives. Efficient and effective communication with stakeholders is increasingly necessary at contaminated sediment Superfund sites, particularly those moving into the remedy phase; however, current guidelines or metrics regarding community engagement are limited. Additionally, the importance of community and stakeholder engagement varies geographically within and between regions, leading to inconsistent expectations. Finally, presentations to the community may address risk mitigation, but such presentations do not always address the full extent of impacts to the community when remedial activities are slated to occur in their neighborhood. All involved parties could benefit from consistency and transparency in this regard. Without consistent guidance and messaging, parties who are performing or participating in remedy design and implementation are at risk of project schedule delays and cost increases resulting from inadequate communication with stakeholders.

Approach/Activities. Using case studies, we will evaluate what practices achieve efficient and effective communication with stakeholders and communities, as well as areas for potential improvement. We will present specific suggestions aimed to support agencies in their community and stakeholder engagement throughout the Superfund cleanup process, including consistent in-person and digital messaging to inform communities and stakeholders of important cleanup information. Another suggestion involves including technical support during presentations and meetings to provide technical balance, level expectations, and adequately describe risks and quality of life concerns for community examination of remedial alternatives. Finally, we will evaluate digital presentations and dashboards aimed at harmonizing the community involvement and stakeholder engagement processes.

Results/Lessons Learned. Key steps that consultants and agencies should take to ensure effective communication with stakeholders include the following: early engagement between agencies, consultants, and stakeholders to establish clear written expectations; regular meetings with agencies, consultants, and stakeholders to check in on progress; and attendance at community meetings. Implementation of these steps, potentially by establishing a platform to manage community outreach and information sharing, will lead to clear, balanced communication with the community on realistic technical evaluations of alternatives.