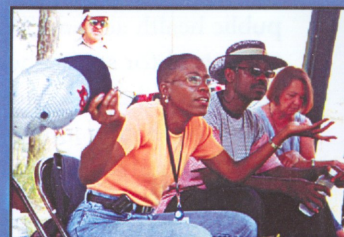
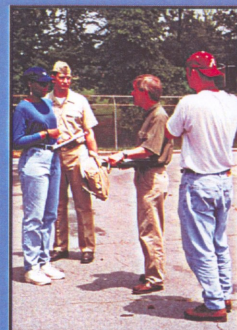


Community Involvement

in ATSDR's Public Health Assessment Process

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ATSDR
AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES
AND DISEASE REGISTRY



Overview of Community Involvement in ATSDR's Public Health Assessment Process

Since it was formally organized in 1985, ATSDR has embraced the philosophy of continuous improvement of and increased attention to its community involvement efforts. Significant strides have been made to ensure that the public health assessment process used by ATSDR and its cooperative agreement partners engages affected communities, tribes, and other stakeholders. Enhanced communication between ATSDR and communities has fostered the development of timely, appropriate, and understandable community involvement activities and products. Community involvement resources and methods have been developed that draw communities toward participation in the design and implementation of public health activities.

ATSDR must continue to place the community at the center of its response. The practice of involving the community in the assessment process requires earnest and respectful attention. The public health response mechanism must continue to change to accommodate the expectations of its customers. The result of the public health assessment process is not just a document, but a community-based strategy for comprehensive public health actions. This overview will provide readers with a quick reference guide to the community involvement aspects of this strategy.

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What is ATSDR?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, was established to protect the public from hazardous wastes and releases of toxic materials into the environment. ATSDR works closely with local, state, and federal agencies, tribal governments, and communities to assess the nature and extent of contamination, identify hazards and potential exposures, make recommendations to protect the public's health, and implement health intervention programs.

Why Does ATSDR Involve the Community in the Public Health Assessment Process?

Communities living around hazardous waste sites are concerned that they are being exposed to hazardous substances being released into the environment. To effectively implement ATSDR's programs, the agency works with communities, listening to and understanding their health concerns and seeking their guidance on where, when, and how to take public health actions. The public health assessment (PHA) process is a form of hazard evaluation that serves as a triage tool for setting health priorities. It involves an integrated analysis of site-related information and data, including community health concerns, which leads to a plan for any needed public health actions. Community involvement (CI) and participation in the PHA process are essential; community members provide their health concerns and point out potential human exposures.

What is the Purpose of this Overview?

The purpose of this overview is to provide information about how ATSDR works to involve communities in the PHA process. It describes how ATSDR develops CI strategies and plans CI activities. It lists the specific tools and mechanisms used to implement the CI activities. Most of the information in this overview has been excerpted from ATSDR's Public Health Assessment Guidance Manual (PHAGM, 2002), Chapter 4 "Involving and Communicating with the Community." The final version of the PHAGM will be available on ATSDR's web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov by the end of 2002. Chapter 4 contains additional information and resources about CI. To supplement this overview booklet, ATSDR has provided a CD containing examples of site-specific materials and tools that the agency has used to provide community members with health information and keep them informed and updated.

Definitions of Terms Used in this Overview

Community. The community associated with a site generally consists of people who may be directly affected by site contamination because they currently live near the site or have lived near the site in the past. Community members may include residents, members of local action groups, tribal governments, local officials, health professionals, and local media.

Community involvement (CI). Community involvement provides opportunities for community members to have a role in ATSDR's PHA process. This role goes beyond the communication of information.

Community participation. The involvement of community members in ATSDR's PHA process, health studies, or other program, usually as a direct response to the CI opportunities provided by ATSDR.

Health communication. The use of communication strategies and messages to best meet the needs of the community for culturally appropriate public health information and materials. May include public meetings, fact sheets, media support, and translation.

Health education. Any planned combination of learning experiences designed to predispose, enable, and reinforce voluntary behavior conducive to health in individuals, groups, or communities.



Goals and Objectives for Community Involvement

Community involvement (CI) activities are developed and implemented with the following objectives in mind.

- Earning trust and credibility through open and respectful communications
- Helping community members understand what the PHA process involves
- Promoting collaboration between ATSDR and communities and other agencies
- Providing opportunities for communities to become involved in ATSDR's PHA activities
- Managing and coordinating health communication activities with site communities
- Informing and updating communities about ATSDR's work
- Assisting communities in understanding the possible health impact of exposure to hazardous substances.

Program Areas Addressing Community Needs

ATSDR's interaction with communities can be provided by several programs in different parts of ATSDR or via cooperative agreement programs with states, tribes, and other partners. The leader of the site team is responsible for organizing a team with the combined expertise necessary to address most or all of the needs of the community. Depending on the specific needs at a site, team members from various programs participate in the CI efforts.

Table 1 outlines ATSDR program areas, shows their responsibilities for working with communities, and indicates when they may be included on a site team.

Table 1. ATSDR Program Areas with Responsibilities for Working with Communities

Program	Specialists	Role in the Public Health Assessment Process	Role in Community Involvement	When Included on Site Team?
<p>Division of Health Assessment and Consultation (DHAC)</p> <p>(http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/)</p>	Health assessors, toxicologists, medical officers, specialists in other sciences, health communication specialists.	The site team leader is almost always a health assessor who brings together a team of ATSDR staff to address the needs of the site; coordinates the site team; collaborates with other groups and agencies; evaluates environmental health data; and who is responsible for preparing PHA documents. Other science specialists from DHAC are often needed to address specific site issues.	The site team determines the CI activities that will be conducted. The team leader is usually involved in implementing CI activities; other DHAC scientists may be also become involved.	<p>A DHAC health assessor is usually the team lead for all PHA activities and must be included on the site team.</p> <p>Other science specialists from DHAC are often needed to address specific site issues.</p>
<p>Office of Regional Operations</p> <p>(http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/oro.html)</p>	Regional representative	Office is in one of the ten EPA regional offices. Acts as a liaison with EPA; facilitates implementation of ATSDR's work in the regions; maintains current and historic knowledge of the sites and issues in the specific regions; provides and follows up on ATSDR recommendations; sometimes reviews site-specific information.	<p>Because of proximity to communities, is often the first ATSDR staff to contact communities.</p> <p>Works with site team to develop and implement CI activities. Attends almost all ATSDR community meetings; may also attend those of other agencies. Often takes lead on political issues.</p>	The regional representative is always included on the site team and kept informed of PHA activities.
<p>Community Involvement Branch (CIB)</p>	Health communication specialists	Provides a central point of contact for community members at most sites.	Takes lead on site team in developing and implementing CI activities; manages and coordinates CI activities with site team, the community, other groups and agencies; conducts community meetings; works with media; and develops culturally specific materials, such as fact sheets.	<p>(1) Whenever the site team lead and the regional representative need additional support for community issues.</p> <p>(2) When a petition site is not assigned to a cooperative agreement partner.</p> <p>Note: CIB must prepare media announcements for all documents released.</p>

Program	Specialists	Role in the Public Health Assessment Process	Role in Community Involvement	When Included on Site Team?
Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tribal/)	Environmental health scientists and environmental health specialists	Provides a central, identifiable point of contact for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.	Provides culturally appropriate assistance on site-specific projects; develops needed interagency coordination to address environmental health needs of American Indian and Alaska Native populations.	OTA must be kept informed and/or included on any site team working with American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
Division of Health Education and Promotion (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/dhep.html)	Health educators	Assists communities in understanding, preventing, or mitigating adverse health effects associated with exposure to hazardous substances.	Provides information and training to health-care providers; provides information to enable people in communities to prevent or reduce their exposure to hazardous substances.	Whenever it is determined that health education is needed, either during the PHA process or after the evaluation is completed.
Office of Policy and External Affairs (OPEA) (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/o pea.html)	Public affairs specialists, writer/editors, and visual information specialists	Provides direction and essential support to the agency in the areas of policy, state capacity coordination, marketing, publications and public affairs, visual information services, and congressional inquiries.	Assists with (1) public notices and media announcements; (2) visual information services; (3) public affairs as it pertains to CI; and (4) translating technical health risk information for the lay public.	As needed.
Office of Urban Affairs (OUA) (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/OUA/)		Provides leadership in the areas of minority health and environmental justice.	OUA coordinates activities and programs for minority communities, underserved communities, and low-income communities.	As needed.
Ombudsman (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/COM/omweb.html)		An independent, neutral resource service for all parties (including communities) concerned with environmental health disputes involving ATSDR.	The ATSDR ombudsman can be called to impartially investigate, mediate, and assist when all routine avenues have been exhausted. The ombudsman is an advocate for problem resolution.	As needed.

Program	Specialists	Role in the Public Health Assessment Process	Role in Community Involvement	When Included on Site Team?
<p>Washington, D.C. Office</p> <p>(http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/legislation/)</p>	Public health advisors	Provides a critical information link in Washington between ATSDR and the legislative branch and the other executive branch agencies of government; improves the environmental health policy-making process by sharing ATSDR's science-based conclusions and recommendations with Congress.	Provides congressional members and their staffs with information about ATSDR's site activities in their districts and states and also provides and interprets public health information about the health effects related to exposure to hazardous substances.	As needed.
<p>Office of the Assistant Administrator</p> <p>(http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/OAA.html)</p>		Promotes programs in support of environmental health issues; supports applied research activities relevant to ATSDR's mission through the development and implementation of research plans and science policy for the agency.	Provides oversight and review for some sites.	As needed.

Working with Communities

To implement its program and carry out its responsibilities, ATSDR must involve communities and tribes in its work. This is particularly true for the PHA program, which is the starting point for ATSDR's site-specific public health activities. Building trust and credibility is central to working with community members. ATSDR creates opportunities to get to know the community better, to listen to their concerns, and to help them understand how ATSDR will respond to their concerns. Usually these opportunities help build the community's trust in ATSDR's work at the site.

Trust is key to the community's cooperation during the PHA process and for the community's willingness to accept ATSDR's results and conclusions (even if they may not entirely agree with the outcome) and to respond to its recommendations. Following are some significant elements of CI that are considered whenever ATSDR works with community members.

Confidentiality and Privacy—Personal information that ATSDR receives from the public, such as community health concerns, names and addresses, and medical records, is considered confidential. Such data are handled in accordance with agency guidance for confidentiality and privacy.

Cultural Sensitivity—The communities located near a site may include different ethnic or minority groups and members of tribal nations. CI activities must be conducted in a way that is sensitive to each group's culture and language.

Environmental Justice—Environmental justice refers to efforts to ensure that all populations, regardless of their economic status or political power, are treated equally with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. These efforts help ensure that no population unfairly shoulders the negative human health and environmental impacts of pollution.

Health Communication—ATSDR provides community members with information about (1) ATSDR and its responsibilities; (2) the PHA process; (3) the environmental site; (4) how the community can participate and provide input; (5) how the community's input will be used; (6) the conclusions and recommendations of ATSDR's assessment; (7) and what community members might need to do to protect themselves from environmental contamination in their neighborhoods.

On the basis of what the agency learns from and about the community, ATSDR will develop health communication strategies and messages that are applicable and understandable in the community. Following are examples of some typical strategies or messages.

- Explain ATSDR's roles, mandates, and limitations to the communities throughout the process.
- Develop understandable and culturally appropriate messages and materials and site-specific presentations.
- Offer communication methods options and develop communication strategies that best meet the needs of the community.
- Let the community define its own level of involvement in the process.
- Provide translation of materials and provide translators for community meetings when needed.
- Use various types of publicity about ATSDR's meetings and evaluations: media announcements and sessions, ads, fliers, and public service announcements.
- Provide communities with the tools and information they may need to participate in ATSDR's public health activities.
- Present technical information in as clear and understandable a manner as possible without sacrificing accuracy.

A primer on Health Risk Communication can be found at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HEC/primer.html>.

Public Health Assessment Terms

The public health assessment (PHA) process is the method that ATSDR has developed to evaluate the public health implications of exposure to environmental contamination. The purpose of the process is to find out whether people have been or are being exposed to hazardous substances and, if so, whether that exposure is harmful (or potentially harmful) and should be stopped or reduced.

The findings of the PHA process can be communicated in either a public health assessment document or a health consultation (HC). The audiences for these reports include communities and other agencies.

During the course of the PHA process, ATSDR may identify the need to better define or prevent exposures or illnesses in a particular community. ATSDR's response to such a need might include issuing a public health advisory, initiating an exposure investigation, recommending a health study, or conducting health education.

For additional information about these terms and others, please see the back page of this booklet.



Community Involvement Strategies, Activities, and Tools/Mechanisms

Community involvement strategies and activities, along with the tools and mechanisms used to implement them, are site-specific—dependent on the community, the site, the possible public health hazard, and other issues, such as ATSDR's available resources. Not all CI activities occur at all sites. Also, strategies may change over time based on input from the community and other stakeholders throughout the PHA process. Therefore, the ATSDR staff who make up the team members at a particular site must determine which CI activities are appropriate based on the site situation and, at the same time, which are possible based on resource availability.

The ideal CI approach is to involve all communities to the greatest extent possible. However, there is sometimes a disparity between what the community needs and expects and what ATSDR can actually do because of limited resources. ATSDR will continually need to prioritize the use of its CI resources among sites and also within each individual site.

Developing Community Involvement Strategies

Site team members develop strategies for involving and interacting with the public throughout the PHA process. Different CI strategies may need to be considered at different stages of the process, such as during the initial gathering of information about the site and the community; during ongoing activities as the PHA is conducted; when the public is given the opportunity to comment on the draft PHA document; and during the communication of final results, recommendations, and follow-up activities.

Health communication specialists assist site teams in understanding which CI tools are most appropriate for the particular circumstances at the site and when they should be used. Also, the site team must determine whether ATSDR has sufficient resources to implement the strategies. The site team collaborates with other agencies and groups (for example, federal agencies, state health and environmental agencies, local health departments, citizens' advisory groups, and medical advisory groups) that may already be working with and providing information to community members at a site. Table 2 lists some of the issues that the site team considers when developing CI strategies.

Type	Table 2. Issues to be Considered When Developing Community Involvement Strategies
Community	<p>Community Health Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many community members are concerned about the site? What is the level of the community's concern? Is the level of community concern higher (or lower) than environmental health risk at site would suggest? Are community concerns unknown? <p>Demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many community members live near the site? Are there any potentially sensitive populations that could be exposed? Does sociodemographic information suggest need for additional CI resources, such as translation? How do the community members get information? From newspaper, radio, television, word-of-mouth, etc.? <p>Community interest in the PHA process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How involved in the PHA process would the community like to be? How would the community like to be kept updated and informed about ATSDR's activities and work? Community meetings? Fact sheets? Specific types of media? Would some community members or community groups prefer e-mailed newsletters and updates? How many community groups or activist groups are involved; how active are they? Should ATSDR consider working with a specific community group already formed or should the agency consider forming a new one? <p>Media Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has the community already heard from the media? Are there misconceptions that need to be dispelled? Will media support require more CI resources than usual? Should OPEA be directly involved? <p>ATSDR's support of the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there American Indian or Alaska Native communities at the site? Should OTA be involved at the site? Is site an environmental justice, child health, Brownsfield, etc., site? Will OUA be involved? What past experiences has the community had with "government" agencies? Does site have higher level of need for CI resources, such as the need to provide more frequent updates than usual? How active will the regional representative (ORO) be in CI efforts? DHEP?
Environmental Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is site a public health hazard? Is hazard acute or chronic? Are environmental health risks unknown? Does DHAC/ATSDR management consider the site a high priority? Does site work involve a health study or exposure investigation? Is there any health outcome data or biological data? Does it seem plausible that a health connection could be established between contaminant exposures and community health concerns? Would a physician enhance outreach at the community meetings? Are data available for review now or must DHAC wait for it? If site is a Superfund site, where is it in the remedial process? Has ATSDR only recently become involved in this site? Or has ATSDR almost completed its work at this site? Do the community members need information/outreach/health education now or can this wait until a report (such as a PHA or health consultation) is generated?
Elected Official	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the ATSDR Washington Office already involved? Informed? What other agencies are involved and must be kept updated? Is coordination with other agencies especially difficult? How often will congressional briefings be required? How many agencies/congressional staffers/etc., will need to be notified in a certain order, with a certain protocol? How resource-intensive will all this be? Will regional representative (ORO) be taking lead on political issues?
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many people on site team? How many divisions/offices are involved? What is the time frame for report (PHA, HC, fact sheet, etc.) development and communication? What type of clearance will be required? At what levels? Will the Visual Information Center be involved in preparing outreach materials?

Types of Community Involvement Activities

Opportunities for site communities to become involved in the PHA process include the following. The specific tools for implementing these activities are discussed in the next section.

1. Conducting individual one-on-one sessions to enable community members to inform the site team about their health concerns and other information.
2. Conducting meetings, conference calls, and mailouts of information to keep the community updated about the status of PHA activities.
3. Establishing formal or informal community groups to discuss issues and formulate questions.
4. Establishing information repositories, usually in local libraries, to provide community members access to ATSDR's PHA documents.
5. Providing opportunities for the public to comment on draft PHA documents.
6. Conducting activities during the implementation of recommendations or public health actions, such as during a health study or an exposure investigation.
7. Providing contacts at ATSDR to enable community members and other stakeholders to (1) obtain site-related public health information and any related explanation that might be needed; (2) add names to the site mailing list; (3) provide health concerns or other information about the site; (4) express their desire to influence site activities; and/or (5) provide feedback about ATSDR's PHA activities at the site.
8. Provide opportunities for the public to assist in planning and implementing CI activities and in making public health decisions.

Tools and Mechanisms for Implementing Community Involvement Activities

ATSDR conducts different types of CI activities at different sites. The specific tools and mechanisms for implementing those activities are listed in Table 3. Not all of these tools and mechanisms are used at every site. Table 4 outlines how the level of CI may vary from site to site depending on the phase of the PHA process, the level of community interest, the degree of hazard a site poses, and other site-specific issues.

Table 3. Community Involvement Tools/Mechanisms Used

Type	Specific Tools/ Mechanisms	Definition/Explanation	When Used and Why
Initial Data Gathering	ATSDR contacts community members and community groups, other governmental agencies, and others interested in site.	Information is usually obtained by phone and by reviewing available documents.	When first beginning to learn about the site and the site community.
	Demographic information and introductory maps	Obtained using the Geographical Information System (GIS) and the Internet.	Introductory demographic maps are developed for every PHA of a site; additional demographic information is obtained as needed.
Providing Information to the Community	Distribution by mail using mailing lists	Some sources of mailing lists: (1) other governmental agencies and (2) names and addresses of attendees at community meetings.	Used to distribute fact sheets, newsletters, and flyers by direct mail.
	Information repositories	Established at convenient locations (such as public libraries).	Used to house copies of important site-related documents for review by the community; often co-located with EPA's or the state's information repository.

Type	Specific Tools/ Mechanisms	Definition/Explanation	When Used and Why
Community Meetings	Interviews	One-on-one meetings with local community members. Interviews can be conducted in person or by telephone.	Used to obtain the different perspectives within the local community.
	Public availability sessions	An informal meeting where community members can talk confidentially one-on-one with ATSDR about their health and site-related concerns.	ATSDR uses the community health concerns gathered at this session to help direct the PHA process.
	Poster sessions	ATSDR staff members meet with community members and others in small groups to discuss information displayed on posters on a wall or table top.	Agency staff give informal presentations, answer questions, and discuss concerns with interested members of the public.
	Public meetings	ATSDR and possibly representatives from other agencies meet with community members to present and discuss information about their work at a site.	ATSDR discusses the PHA process, the findings of its site-specific evaluations, and planned future activities and answers questions.
	Other meetings	Sometimes other types of meetings are held in response to specific community needs or environmental issues.	May include meetings of workgroups formed to address a particular issue, or workshops conducted to provide technical or educational information to communities.
Community Groups	Established community groups	Community groups are made up of community members who have decided to work together to address one or more issues related to environmental contamination in their neighborhood and its possible effect on the health of the community.	ATSDR interacts and works with community groups that have already been established.
	Establishment of new community group	ATSDR assists in establishing an informal group to address site issues. ATSDR's role can range from being a participant to having some responsibilities for conducting the group meetings.	Occurs when community members at some sites prefer more direct participation in the PHA process.
	Community Assistance Panel (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/caps.html)	A CAP is a group of people, both community members and ATSDR staff, who meet regularly to (1) share environmental and health information about a specific site and (2) assist ATSDR in making public health decisions that could affect the lives of community members.	Factors that influence whether ATSDR decides to form a CAP at a particular site include: the degree of community interest, whether varying viewpoints exist regarding the health issues, and a willingness on the part of the public to actively participate in the process. CAPs were established by ATSDR at seven sites during the last 12 years.
	Federal Advisory Committee Act - Committee or Subcommittee	Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), federal government agencies can convene committees of community members and others to provide consensus advice and recommendations.	FACA committees are much more resource-intensive and require a much greater time commitment than CAPs. ATSDR has used FACA committees only in rare situations where sufficient resources are available and community members have indicated a very strong interest in providing consensus advice.

Type	Specific Tools/ Mechanisms	Definition/Explanation	When Used and Why
Materials	Fact sheets - General	Several general (not site-specific) fact sheets are available to assist ATSDR staff in introducing the community, the media, and other stakeholders to ATSDR and its mission and work.	Fact sheets can be mailed out to familiarize the recipients with the information prior to a meeting or they can be given out at the meeting.
	Fact sheets - About specific technical information	Several general technical fact sheets are available on topics such as asbestos and cancer.	Provided to stakeholders at relevant sites.
	Fact sheets - About specific sites	Site-specific fact sheets usually briefly introduce the reader to ATSDR, summarize information about the site, and describe ATSDR's plans for the PHA process.	Used to update communities and to inform them about the availability of a report (PHA, HC, etc.) and how to obtain a copy.
	Flyers	Flyers are one-page meeting announcements that are distributed to community members and other stakeholders. They contain information about the type of meeting and the agenda, the meeting location and times, and background information.	Usually they are mailed out by ATSDR to announce meetings. Sometimes community members or other stakeholders assist in the distribution.
Media Support	Media announcements, public service announcements, meetings and interviews with the media	ATSDR provides the media (local newspapers and radio and television stations) with information about its work by issuing media announcements, holding media sessions, or providing or requesting interviews. Occasionally ATSDR pays for advertising.	ATSDR is required to submit announcements to the media whenever a public meeting is held or when a public comment or final report (PHA, HC) is released. Other types of information are provided to the media as requested by them or as needed to inform the community.
Ways to Contact ATSDR	Call ATSDR's toll-free hotline, 1-888-42ATSDR (1-888-422-8737)	Community members and others can contact ATSDR toll-free and request to talk with a specific person or about a specific site.	Community members are encouraged to contact ATSDR to provide information and their health concerns, to be added to the site mailing list, or to request additional information about a site.
	Visit ATSDR's Web site (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov)	ATSDR's web site contains information about ATSDR's general and site-specific work.	Community members can access information as needed.
	E-mail the Community Involvement Branch: (atsdr Cib@cdc.gov)	ATSDR's health communication specialists respond to e-mail messages from the community and other stakeholders.	Community members can contact ATSDR staff as needed.

Incorporating Community Involvement Activities into the Public Health Assessment Process

Community involvement and health communication activities, based on the strategies developed by the site team, are an important component of the PHA process, but will vary from site to site. Table 4 indicates the types of CI activities that could be implemented at three hypothetical environmental sites during various stages of the PHA process. The table shows how the CI activities may be incorporated into the various stages of the PHA process.

ATSDR's level of involvement is different (low, medium, or high) for the three site examples. The three levels of CI shown are *only* examples (points on the continuum) of CI activities that may be conducted at sites. Activities for a specific site may be of different types and may be conducted at different stages of the PHA process.

Table 4. Activities That Might Be Conducted at Three Different Levels of Community Involvement and Participation

Phase of Public Health Assessment Process	Community Involvement Activities and Information		
	Low Involvement Site	Medium Involvement Site	High Involvement Site
Initial data gathering about community from petitioners (if a petitioned site); community leaders; local, state, tribal, and federal agencies; local media.	<p>Results of data gathering:</p> <p>(1) Few, if any, community members are interested or</p> <p>(2) Collection of community health concerns has been coordinated with other agencies.</p> <p>Establish repositories.</p>	<p>Results of data gathering: Some community interest seems to exist.</p> <p>Establish repositories.</p>	<p>Results of data gathering: A high level of community interest, political interest, and/or high likelihood of exposure identified.</p> <p>Establish repositories.</p>
Initial interaction/meetings* with community	<p>No meeting is held.</p> <p>Additional information may be gathered to ensure there is no community interest, even in small segments of population.</p>	<p>Usually at least one meeting* (usually a public availability session) to gather community health concerns and other information.</p> <p>Preparation of mailing list.</p> <p>Notification of meeting via flyers, media announcement.</p>	<p>Multiple community meetings*; coordination with local, state, and federal agencies.</p> <p>Local, state, and congressional briefings</p> <p>Media sessions and interviews.</p> <p>Preparation of mailing lists.</p> <p>Notification of meetings via flyers, media announcements, advertisements, etc.</p>

Phase of Public Health Assessment Process	Community Involvement Activities and Information		
	Low Involvement Site	Medium Involvement Site	High Involvement Site
Compiling and determining how to address community health concerns	If no community health concerns are identified, note the CI efforts taken to determine the concerns. This information will be included in the PHA.	<p>Compile the community's concerns into at least three categories: (1) health concerns, (2) environmental concerns, and (3) other concerns.</p> <p>Plan how ATSDR will address each concern. Some concerns may need to be referred to another agency, such as work-related concerns. Whenever possible, notify community members at this time, if their concerns are beyond the scope of ATSDR's mission.</p>	<p>Compile the community's concerns into at least three categories: (1) health concerns, (2) environmental concerns, and (3) other concerns.</p> <p>Plan how ATSDR will address each concern. Some concerns may need to be referred to another agency, such as work-related concerns. Whenever possible, notify community members at this time, if their concerns are beyond the scope of ATSDR's mission.</p>
Planning evaluation methodology (to determine effectiveness of PHA activities)	<p>Minimal evaluation efforts:</p> <p>(1) Professional judgment.</p> <p>(2) Reader's survey that is included with documents.</p>	<p>In addition to lower level:</p> <p>(3) Community feedback on logistics of meetings (does not require Office of Management and Budget clearance).</p> <p>(4) Evaluation of indices of community participation, such as attendance at meetings, calls to ATSDR, requests for information.</p>	<p>In addition to lower and medium levels:</p> <p>(5) To be determined: Any surveys via mailout or telephone will need to go through Office of Management and Budget clearance. Determine way to measure (a) increased level of community participation and community satisfaction; (b) improved service and relationships with customer groups; and (c) short- and long-term impact of ATSDR's work on community's health and quality of life.</p>

Phase of Public Health Assessment Process	Community Involvement Activities and Information		
	Low Involvement Site	Medium Involvement Site	High Involvement Site
<p>Participation of community in the PHA process</p> <p>(Note: ATSDR determines the level at which the community would like to participate via interviews with community members and others, actual participation rates, etc. The level of interest may change over time.)</p>	<p>Ways the community might participate:</p> <p>(1) Contact ATSDR as notified in media announcements.</p> <p>(2) Provide comments on ATSDR's reports (for example, PHAs, HCs).</p>	<p>In addition to lower level participation:</p> <p>(3) Attend meetings and provide health concerns.</p> <p>(4) Contact ATSDR to get on mailing list.</p> <p>(5) Encourage other community members to attend meetings and provide health concerns.</p>	<p>In addition to lower and medium levels of participation:</p> <p>(6) ATSDR becomes aware that community would like more direct participation.</p> <p>(7) ATSDR and community discuss best ways to enhance community participation.</p> <p>(8) Depending on community interest, formation of community advisory committee may be considered or ATSDR may work with one already established.</p> <p>(9) Each site community has specific needs and interacts differently. ATSDR responds to all reasonable requests, continually reminds community of what they can expect from ATSDR, and prioritizes activities at this site based on available resources.</p>
<p>Community involvement activities conducted during evaluation of environmental and health data and other information.</p>	None	Update community maybe one or two times via distribution of fact sheet.	<p>More frequent updates, possibly quarterly via community meetings and/or distribution of fact sheets/newsletters.</p> <p>Various public health activities can occur during evaluation, such as health education, community workshop, an exposure investigation, the release of a public health advisory, etc.</p>

Phase of Public Health Assessment Process	Community Involvement Activities and Information		
	Low Involvement Site	Medium Involvement Site	High Involvement Site
<p>Community involvement information/assistance included in document (PHA and other documents as needed)</p> <p>For all sites, include the following:</p> <p>(1) Document CI activities.</p> <p>(2) Respond to community health concerns in a clear and concise way.</p> <p>(3) Work with health communication specialists, as necessary, to ensure language in the <i>Summary</i>, <i>Conclusion</i>, and <i>Recommendation</i> sections is suitable for the site-specific audience.</p>	<p>In addition to 1–3 include:</p> <p>(4) Efforts to find community members concerned about site.</p> <p>(5) How community health concerns were obtained.</p> <p>(6) Location of information repositories.</p>	<p>In addition to lower level include:</p> <p>(7) CI activities conducted to involve community members and their participation.</p> <p>(8) How community was informed of meetings and other CI activities, including the use of electronic media.</p> <p>(9) Any pertinent coordination efforts with community groups, other organizations, the media, and other government agencies.</p>	<p>In addition to lower and medium level, include:</p> <p>(10) CI activities conducted to enhance participation by community members and their response.</p> <p>(11) How ATSDR interacted with community groups, either those already formed or newly established with ATSDR's hel</p> <p>(12) How community members participated in planning, assessment, and intervention activities.</p> <p>(13) Indications of mutually beneficial partnership with community, organizations, and other government agencies.</p>

Phase of Public Health Assessment Process	Community Involvement Activities and Information		
	Low Involvement Site	Medium Involvement Site	High Involvement Site
Community involvement activities conducted during distribution of document (PHA, HC, Exposure Investigation) for public comment (usually) and then later as final document.	Media announcement. Copy of document is placed in repositories.	Media announcement. Possibly notification of distribution via flyers or a fact sheet explaining location of document in repositories and also how to obtain a copy of the document from ATSDR. Possibly a community meeting if there is enough community interest. Copy of document and accompanying summary fact sheets (if prepared) are placed in repositories.	Media announcement. Notification of document distribution via flyers and/or fact sheets/newsletters, media announcements, advertisements, etc Coordination with local, state, and federal agencies. Local, state, and/or congressional briefings Media sessions and interviews. Community meetings Notification of meetings via flyers, media announcements, advertisements, etc. Copy of document and accompanying summary fact sheets are placed in repositories.
Community involvement activities conducted during implementation of recommendations in PHA or HC, such as additional assessments, a health study, or an exposure investigation.	Dependent on the type of recommendations, the site, and the expressed needs of community members.	Dependent on the type of recommendations, the site, and the expressed needs of community members.	Dependent on the type of recommendations, the site, and the expressed needs of community members.

* Community meetings can refer to any of the various types of meetings with the public: public availability sessions (individual community member interviews), poster sessions, public meetings, community group meetings, etc.

Additional Community Involvement Resources

Most of the information in this overview has been excerpted from ATSDR's Public Health Assessment Guidance Manual (PHAGM, 2002), Chapter 4 "Involving and Communicating with the Community." The final version of the PHAGM will be available on ATSDR's web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov by the end of 2002. Chapter 4 contains additional information on CI, such as the use of the public comment process, how ATSDR responds to community health concerns, and Guidelines for Effective Communication (Appendix B). Additional resources are also provided, including online ones.

The following fact sheets contain additional information about ATSDR products and services and can be accessed at the following web pages or requested from ATSDR's Information Center by calling the toll-free number, 1-888-422-8737.

- *About ATSDR* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/COM/about.htm>) provides general information about ATSDR.
- *What you can expect from ATSDR* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/COM/whatyou.htm>) presents ATSDR's mission and explains what ATSDR can and cannot do based on its legal authority.
- *Public health assessment* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha.html>) describes the scope of the assessment, the types of information evaluated, and how the evaluation is used. It also includes information about how community members can become involved in the process.
- *Health consultation* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/consult.html>) describes the purpose of this type of assessment, the types of information evaluated, and how recommendations are used.
- *Petitioned public health assessment* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/petition.html>) describes how community members can ask ("petition") ATSDR to evaluate an environmental site.
- *Exposure investigations* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/expinfo.html>) explains exposure investigations (EIs) and how ATSDR uses EIs to characterize past, current, and possible future human exposures to hazardous substances and to evaluate existing and possible health effects related to those exposures.
- *Public health advisories* (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/healthad.html>) describes how ATSDR evaluates and responds to a hazardous substances release into the environment that poses an immediate and significant danger to people's health.

Contact ATSDR toll-free at 1-888-422-8737

Visit ATSDR's Web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

E-mail ATSDR's Community Involvement Branch at atsdrcib@cdc.gov

**Write the ATSDR Information Center at
1600 Clifton Road, NE; Mailstop E-57; Atlanta, Georgia 30333**