RCRA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

This checklist will help industry, agencies and community organizations understand how to work together and independently on community engagement for communities located near Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)-regulated businesses and facilities. This checklist is organized in three steps: 1) Understand the desired outcomes of community engagement; 2) Develop goals for community engagement; and 3) Decide which community engagement tool to use.

Step 1. Be Clear About the Outcomes of Community Engagement

For Agencies:

- Effective interaction with citizens, groups, regulated industry, states, tribes, press, and elected officials.
- In conjunction with states, effective oversight of required community engagement activities conducted by regulated industry.

For Industry:

- Effective interaction with citizens, groups, elected officials, local/state/federal agencies, and tribes.
- Satisfy regulatory community engagement requirements.
- Successful public outreach and education and effective community meetings.

For Public:

- Successful outreach to and involvement of the community near the facility and other local groups.
- Successful gathering of information and data.
- Successful interaction with elected officials, federal and state agencies, regulated industry and news media.
- Maximize impact of community engagement activities provided by industry or agencies.

Step 2: Develop Goals for Community Engagement

Comply with federal and state community engagement requirements and decide what level of public participation is appropriate for the community and circumstances.

The Spectrum of Community Engagement

Increasing Level of Public Engagement					
	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Sustain**
Community Engagement Goal/Need	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/ or solutions.	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to make sure public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Maintain public engagement over time, satisfy commitments made.
Community Engagement Tools	Fact sheets, web sites, frequently asked questions, public notices, presentations, information repositories, news releases.	Public comment periods, public meetings, focus groups, surveys/ polls, community interviews, community involvement plans, door to door canvassing.	Availability sessions/ open houses, workshops.	Community advisory committees, consensus building.	Public meetings, availability sessions, open houses, workshops, web sites, mailings, reports.

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2): http://www.iap2.org.

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Agencies, facility staff or community groups may want to consider expanded public participation activities at priority facilities, controversial facilities or at facilities that may pose greater risk to surrounding communities. Those in charge of community engagement should ask themselves the following questions to help determine the goal of specific community engagement activities and the corresponding best techniques to satisfy their goals.

☑ Have there been community complaints regarding the facility or its impacts? If yes, consider using an 'inform, ''consult,' 'involve,' or 'collaborate' technique from the table above.

☑ Is information available indicating potential health or environmental threats to the community near a RCRA facility? If yes, consider using an 'inform, ''consult,' 'involve,' or 'collaborate' technique from the table above.

☑ Is there a legal requirement for public involvement such as during RCRA permit, corrective action or other processes? If yes, at a minimum, follow the required engagement activities.

☑ Have previous attempts at involving the public (if any) been successful? If not, why? In this situation, agencies, facility staff or public interest groups may wish to seek input from other stakeholders to help determine better methods and approaches to public participation activities.

☑ Do you have adequate time and resources (both people and money) to set up and run the type of process desired? If not, do not choose that type of process.

Step 3: Decide Which Community Engagement Tools to Use

The table below describes specific community engagement tools and their benefits for industry, government agencies and community organizations. Note that this list of tools is an illustration, but is not exhaustive.

Community Engagement Tools

CE Tool	Brief Description	Industry	Agencies	Community Organizations
Community Profile	Outlines local issues, events and players.	Helps fine-tune communication strategy to specific community.	Helps fine-tune communication strategy to specific community.	Allows information received by industry or agencies to be appropriate for the specific community.
Community Interviews	One-on-one interviews to gather information about community needs.	Provides industry with knowledge of specific community needs, interests and concerns.	Provides agencies with knowledge of specific community needs, interests and concerns.	Allows community members to be heard and to articulate needs, interests and concerns.
Communication Strategies	Strategy on how to inform community.	Provides road map for communication to clearly articulate message.	Allows message and audience to be determined and agencies to adjust their role.	Provides clear message that is easily understandable to community members.
Facilitation or Conflict Resolution	Neutral support for meeting, conflicts and dialogue.	Allows for more constructive dialogue in contentious situations.	Allows for more constructive dialogue in contentious situations.	Allows for more constructive dialogue in contentious situations.
Fact Sheets, FAQs	Summary of information in plain English.	Mechanism for industry to disseminate information in a user-friendly way.	Mechanism for agencies to disseminate information in a user-friendly way.	Provides information in an accessible format for community members.
Information Repository	Local location of all documents related to the Site.	Provides a location for community access to all site related documents.	Provides a location for community access to all site related documents.	Provides a local location to access all site related documents.
Public Comment Periods	Time period during which agency accepts comments on draft document.	Allows time for documents to be commented on.	Allows community comments to be received and responded to.	Provides time frame to submit comments on a draft document and opportunity to review proposed actions.
Public Meetings	A forum where interested persons can ask questions.	Provides a setting to deliver information to a large number of people.	Provides a setting to deliver information to a large number of people.	Enables community members to learn and to voice their concerns.
Public Notices	Advertisement of public comment periods.	Method for advertising a public comment period.	Provides notice to community members about public comment period.	Provides notice on public comment period.

CE Tool	Brief Description	Industry	Agencies	Community Organizations
Public Participation Plans	Outlines community-specific strategy for responding to identified community concerns (note that concerns are ongoing, not limited to the small prism of interview information collected such as during Technical Assistance Needs Assessments (TANAs).	Attempts to ensure that all concerns that have been expressed are adequately addressed through design of a CE approach for short-term and/or long-term actions.	Attempts to ensure that all concerns that have been expressed are adequately addressed through design of a CE approach for short-term and/or long-term actions.	Provides road map for addressing community concerns and keeping the public meaningfully engaged.
Education of Public, Workshops	Seminar or other methods to provide education.	Provides tool to educate community members and time for active engagement among all participants.	Provides opportunity for agencies to educate community members and time for active engagement among all participants.	Provides opportunity for learning about site-specific issues and the process in general, also time to actively engage with facility and regulator representatives.

For a full description of different community engagement options and information on when and how to best implement these tools, see the ***RCRA Public Participation Manual***.

RCRA requirements mandate public involvement during cleanup processes at hazardous waste facilities, known as corrective action. Public involvement is also required during RCRA permitting, renewal and permit modification processes. The permit applicant and the permitting agency have different community engagement responsibilities. For a full list of public involvement actions required, see Chapter 3 (permitting and permit modification process) and see Chapter 4 (corrective action process) of the ***RCRA Public Participation Manual***.

RCRA and other statutes support community engagement via these requirements, but to help implement more robust CE, one may choose to go beyond compliance. The reason for this is that community engagement plays an important role in the planning and delivery of environmental services.

Resources
- 2016 Edition of the RCRA Public Participation Manual
- EPA Office of International and Tribal Affairs, Public Participation Guide