



**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7**, 11201 Renner Blvd., Lenexa, KS 66219  
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Nine Tribal Nations

## **Eric Nold, EPA Region 7 On-Scene Coordinator**

**June 24, 2020**

“I was actually on a bicycle ride in the middle of winter up in Iowa called the ‘BRR Ride.’ Walked into a restaurant, and instead of it being a loud kind of thing like you would expect, partying, everybody was dead silent and staring up in the corner. So we look up there, and we could see on the TV the space shuttle breaking apart and starting to descend. I told the guys that I was with, I said, ‘Well, it’s time to turn around and go back. I need to go back home.’ And they started laughing like, ‘They’re never going to ask for EPA to help on something like that.’ And I go, ‘Oh, I guarantee they will.’ And sure enough, before I even got back to my vehicle, the phone rang [and I heard], ‘You need to be in Texas tonight.’ I was like, ‘I can’t make it tonight.’ So they had me on a flight the next morning.

I mentioned to them that there’s no possible way that all these parts are going to fall on land. So, at that time, EPA Region 7 had the most robust dive unit for EPA in the U.S. I think there was seven dive units total in EPA, and we were the only all-OSC, all-hazard dive unit, which is what you would need for this because of not only the experiments that were on-board, but mainly the fuel system on the space shuttle is hydrazine, which is crazy scary and dangerous. They say that you’re pretty much dead if you smell it. So, a big concern was that some of these pods that held the hydrazine may have made it all the way down intact and still contained the hydrazine in it. We basically spent the next three months diving, every day, at Toledo Bend Reservoir.”

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