

**Del Amo/Montrose Superfund Site – Annual “Site Updates”
Newsletter**

Internship Final Report

Alejandra Kolbe Arce

California State University Northridge (CSUN)

CSU/EPA Summer Internship

EPA Mentor: Yolanda Sanchez – EPA/Region 9

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Sullivan - CSUN

August 25th, 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Acknowledgements | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 2 |
| Project Objectives | 2 |
| Project Approach | 3 |
| Project Outcomes | 4 |
| Conclusions | 5 |

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible through the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region IX and the California State University

I would also like to acknowledge the EPA mentor, Yolanda Sanchez, and the faculty advisor Dr. Michael Sullivan for providing me the guidance required to be part of the process, achieve satisfying results, and particularly for providing the opportunity to work within the organization and meet part of the US EPA Region 9 staff.

Executive Summary

My name is Alejandra Kolbe, an Environmental and Occupational Health (EOH) Graduate student focused on Environmental/Occupational Health. After following the application process, I obtained the position as a Summer intern with the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 Del Amo & Montrose Superfund Sites team.

The National Priorities List (NPL) is the list of the most complex, uncontrolled hazardous waste sites throughout the United States that threaten public health and the environment. In 1989, EPA added the Montrose Chemical Corporation of California (Montrose) manufacturing plant property and the impacted areas (“Superfund site”) to the NPL, and in 2002, EPA added the Del Amo Facility and the affected areas to the NPL.

EPA Superfund program strives to keep the community well-informed of ongoing activities, encourages and offers opportunities for the community members to get involved, and incorporates community input into planned actions. To do so, EPA Community Involvement Plan (CIP) hosts community site update meetings, publish site updates newsletters, sends site updates emails to highly interested stakeholders; and participates in door-to-door outreach and mobile information center events in the neighborhood

Project Objectives

This project goal is to support Region 9 Del Amo and Montrose Superfund Sites team to develop a site updates newsletter for the different past and ongoing cleanup activities, and also to inform the community about the different ways they can get involved and up-to-date with the Superfund Sites.

Specific objectives of this internship included:

- Review materials about the Del Amo and Montrose Superfund sites, such as fact sheets, the Agency websites, overview PowerPoint presentations, and the Del Amo Action Committee’s (a local community activist group) website
- Visit the local information repositories and the community impacted by the Del Amo and Montrose Superfund sites

- Review materials specific to the Superfund Cleanup Process, such as Superfund 101 online training, Superfund 101 Brochure, Superfund Community Involvement Handbook, and training materials from Superfund “101 for the community” training course
- Research other annual newsletter/reports for complex, multi-year environmental projects
- Present draft ideas for an annual “site updates” newsletter to the site team and obtain feedback and recommendations
- Revise work, based on feedback from the site team

Project Approach

To fulfill the tasks, I devoted 24 hours per week. The work required of three steps.

Research and Data Collection

To collect and comprehend the information on the Superfund process and the cleanup activities involved in each one of the operable units it was necessary to invest a significant time in research, review and analyze the information available on EPA's website, and other material provided by the EPA mentor.

For this step, I studied materials specific to the Del Amo and Montrose Superfund sites, visited the local information repositories and the community impacted by the Del Amo and Montrose Superfund sites, reviewed materials explicit to the Superfund Cleanup Process, and examined other annual newsletters for complex, multi-year environmental projects.

It was also necessary to research and review different documents to find images that were able to inform about the activities in the Sites without making them difficult to comprehend by any person interested.

Design

The design step of the internship required a complete comprehension of the technical language used in the EPA's technology reports, legal documents, and fact sheets to interpret the complex information in a less intricate but informative style.

Once the content was defined and explained it into a more approachable language, the design of the newsletter was done using the Microsoft Word program Publisher, to be later exported in the file format required by the EPA's graphic designer.

Presentations and Feedbacks

Once the newsletter draft was ready weekly conference calls allowed the presentation of the document to Yolanda Sanchez to obtain comments and recommendations.

The newsletter draft was also presented to the site team once a month through a conference call and using EPA's meeting software to share the document with the team in San Francisco and Los Angeles at the same time, and obtain more feedback from them.

After each cycle, the reviewed newsletter required of new modifications, and the research started once again to complete the information based on the feedback from the site team.

Project Outcomes

The project outcome was the foundation of a more informative newsletter that can be sent by mail to the community affected by the Superfund Sites and to whoever is interested in getting information about the Del Amo and Montrose Superfund sites.

The final document presented to the site team provides information about the Superfund sites background, clear descriptions of the operable units and their position in the Superfund process, it also informs the results of previous community involvement events, investigations, communicates future community involvement activities, and describes coming remedial activities in the neighborhoods.

The product of this internship will be used to inform the community using a clear and EPA approved language in the format of a newsletter. Material designed for the newsletter not included in the final version is probably going to be used individually as part of the communication element for the Community Involvement "Open House" event planned for November 2016.

The most valuable lessons learned during the internship besides the thorough understanding of the Superfund Process were the improvement of time management and communicational skills.

This experience allowed me to improve the time management skill, which permitted me to visit the EPA's San Francisco office, meet the site team. It also gave me the opportunity to be part of a field visit to the Superfund sites and participate in a door-to-door visit to the residents next to one of the Montrose Superfund site operable units with the Community involvement coordinator Yolanda Sanchez, and a Remedial Project Manager (RPMs) Yarrisa Martinez.

Furthermore, the type of communication tools used during this remote internship allowed me to improve the communication skills by having frequent video conferences with the EPA mentor, and monthly video conferences with the Del Amo & Montrose Superfund Sites team to review the products and gather feedback on the content.

Conclusions

After two months of work, I completed the internship and the Region 9 Del Amo and Montrose Superfund Sites team received the foundation of a site updates newsletter for the different past and ongoing cleanup activities on Del Amo and Montrose Superfund Sites.

The internship experience is fundamental. The opportunity to design material to be used as a communication tool to inform the community about the cleanup activities in the Superfund Sites required discipline and planning to read all the documents and prepare designs that can be approachable while informative.

The internship taught me how to work with remote offices, report to the main team through video conferences and, required a quick learning and constant preparation to use the specific terms in a more advanced manner than I would expect by just reading about Superfund sites.

Furthermore, the internship experience helped to identify the skills that I require to focus to succeed in future internships, job applications, and professional improvement as an Environmental and Occupational Health Specialist, hopefully with the EPA.