

Improve Communication of Sampling and Testing Results Flagship Update - FY2011 – 2nd Quarter



Description of Flagship Project

- The Improve Communication of Sampling and Testing Results project falls under the “Expanding the Environmental Conversation with Communities” Flagship Theme
- We are developing a new public communication methodology to notify citizens when contamination is found in their communities
- The goal is to simplify scientific language, provide visual illustrations and clear explanations of contamination levels and associated risks, and recommend actions the public should take to protect themselves
- We are identifying regional offices willing to test the approach in real life situations including for Superfund remedial and removal sites and emergency responses
- After exercising and testing the tool, we will incorporate improvements and work to implement the tool Agency-wide
- Additional project information can be found at:
<http://www.epa.gov/oswer/engagementinitiative/act12.htm>

Stakeholders

- Public
- Environmental community
- State and Local Government
- Federal Government

Milestones/Status

- A color coding system is being tested at Superfund remedial and removal site to explain the sampling results at residences and buildings

Highlights of Progress this Quarter

- The Office of External Affairs has been visiting the Regional offices to assist with pilot site selection

Planned Activity for Next Quarter

- Continue using and testing the methodology at pilot sites in each EPA Region
- Improve methods for obtaining citizen feedback
- Begin teaching the color coding system to agency staff

Metrics

- Status of testing the new communication methodology: In progress
- Status of methodology development and guidance for use: Pending completion of testing
- Status of use Agency-wide: Pending completion of testing

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List Benefits or Lessons Learned from this effort:

- To date, data color coding was used successfully to explain lead sampling results to EPA HQ employees, during LibertyRadEx, and most recently to explain air, water and sediment data on the Agency's BP spill website. Additionally, Region 1 implemented color coding at a removal site where individual color charts were created for every affected residence to explain soil contamination levels and resulting actions. We have received positive feedback from NGOs involved in the BP spill and homeowners in Region 1 regarding the understandability of the data.

How will you continue to engage stakeholders?

- We are asking each region to nominate several remedial and removal sites where we can apply the color coding system to explain EPA's sampling data and results. Based on implementation and evaluation of these regional pilot sites, color coding systems will be considered for Agency-wide use, as appropriate. Lessons learned will be used to create a guidance document or case study handbook to institutionalize the use of color coding for communicating data and to help others easily implement this system at their own sites, as appropriate.