



**GEORGE WEBER, INC.**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**FINAL  
TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**LIBBY ASBESTOS SUPERFUND SITE  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SUPPORT**

**PREPARED FOR**

**Summit Technical Resources, Inc.  
USACE, Omaha District  
Contract No. W9128F-09-D-3001  
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**Submitted by:**

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## Executive Summary

**Purpose:** This Technical Memorandum (TM) presents results of an assessment of the Region 8 Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Involvement Program (CI Program) at the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site. The general purposes of the assessment are to: (1) develop a better understanding of the site and EPA's current involvement with the community; and (2) provide EPA with recommendations potentially improving its CI Program.

**Need:** CERCLA compels EPA to consider and account for the needs and desires of stakeholders, particularly those in the impacted community. Collaborative relationships with stakeholders are helpful, if not required, for EPA to achieve its responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Relationships mired in controversy and conflict can hinder the clean-up process. With wide-spread support among stakeholders, the process can progress with fewer interruptions and less EPA time and effort spent on dealing with challenges to their competence, integrity, and activities, and more time and resources on solving problems and making decisions supported by the community.

**Evaluation criteria:** The assessment identifies evaluation criteria providing the basis for the assessment that are values, principles, and best practices drawn from a range of literature, and particularly public participation, risk communication, and EPA CERCLA CI guidance documents. It uses a typology of public participation to characterize the CI Program and provide EPA with a strategic roadmap for improvement. Additionally, it relies on cutting-edge risk communication concepts and standards developed under National Institutes of Health leadership that emphasize collaboration with stakeholders as partners in problem-solving and decision-making in addition to the earlier historic '2-Way Communication' approach.

**Findings:** The assessment finds that the EPA Libby CI Program generally exceeds minimum CERCLA guidance requirements and recommendations. However, EPA could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its CI Program by:

- Using current risk communications principles and practice that emphasize collaboration with stakeholders as partners in problem-solving and decision-making, in addition to using its "2-Way Communication" approach. The CI Program appears to be using a variety of techniques for informing and consulting with stakeholders, essentially functioning as an information conduit.
- Determining and documenting current perceptions of a representative sample of stakeholders that relate to their potential to collaborate in the remediation effort. Particularly important among these are stakeholders' perceptions of EPA's trustworthiness, credibility, and competence.
- Developing a structure and process for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making among the representative range of stakeholders. Current forums for EPA to interact with stakeholders are designed primarily for EPA to inform and consult with stakeholders, not for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making. The forums are largely redundant in agendas and membership that may not achieve comprehensive representation of stakeholders. An exception is the O&M Working Group, critical to maintaining implemented remediation techniques in the future, in which collaboration occurs, but whose mission is focused and membership limited to agency staff.

- Developing Libby Team capacities for planning and implementation. Documents that EPA provided for review are incomplete as implementation plans, e.g., the Community Engagement Plan does not connect activities, outreach products, and programs to community concerns explicitly. The Annual Libby Team Work Plan is activity oriented rather than an implementation plan identifying e.g., specific tasks, required resources, and schedule. Other aspects potentially affecting CI Program implementation are that mechanisms for maintaining institutional memory of stakeholders and evolving relationships are lacking, and resources for conducting all planned and unanticipated CI Program activities may be inadequate.

**Action Recommendations – Strategy and Tactics:** Action recommendations based on cutting-edge principles and practices are presented for EPA to consider. These consist of an overarching strategy, and three sets of tactical actions for implementing it.

The overarching strategy is for EPA to adopt a ‘collaborating network’ framing of its approach to involving stakeholders in the Libby remediation. Under this strategy, EPA would engage with the representative range of stakeholders as partners in problem-solving and decision-making. The CI Program would continue its ‘2-way communications’ tactics to support the collaboration, but more effectively and efficiently by making better use of the network of relationships among stakeholders.

The first set of tactical actions involves EPA determining, documenting, and analyzing current stakeholder perceptions relating to stakeholders’ potential for collaborating in the clean-up. Critical among these are how stakeholders perceive the EPA’s trustworthiness, credibility, and competence. A sequence of activities would develop the required data and analyses: (1) analyzing stakeholders to identify a representative sample to involve in subsequent activities; (2) assessing perceptions of these stakeholders relevant to their potential to collaborate in the clean-up; (3) administering a web-based network analysis tool designed to measure and monitor collaboration among stakeholders; and (4) resolving differing opinions concerning the degree to which the Paperwork Reduction Act does or does not constrain the use of standard social science methods for determining stakeholders’ perceptions at a Superfund Site.

The second set of tactical actions involves EPA designing a structure and process for the network of stakeholders to collaborate in completing the remediation. The action has two mutually supporting components. The first is for EPA to develop a Libby Asbestos Remediation Roundtable (RT) as the forum in which a representative group of stakeholders collaborate to solve problems and make decisions. The RT process would be ‘consensus seeking’, also called ‘informed consent’, in which the participants seek to develop as much agreement as possible among themselves and Libby stakeholders generally for decisions that the RT and/or EPA make. In a ‘consensus seeking’ process, EPA would preserve its legal responsibilities and authority for making final decisions if participants cannot agree. The second component involves the CI Program continuing its ‘2-way communication’ activities in support of the collaboration, but more effectively and efficiently by taking advantage of the network of relationships existing among stakeholders generally. Specific details of the structure and process would depend in large part on information and analyses the first set of tactical actions develops.

The third set of tactical actions involves EPA developing its internal capacities for planning and implementing full stakeholder engagement. The set of actions involves EPA conducting three components: (1) training the EPA Libby Team in the ‘collaborating network’ approach; (2) developing mechanisms for preserving institutional memory of Libby stakeholders, their relationships, and how these develop; and (3) strengthening its capabilities to develop implementation plans.