



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Risk Management Working Group

Meeting Summary

April 22, 1999
Hilton Head Town Hall
Hilton Head, SC

Team B - Risk Communication - of the Risk Management Working Group met on Thursday, April 22, 1:00 p.m., at the Hilton Head Town Hall, Hilton Head, S.C. The topics included a presentation on the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control communication activities, activities and roles for the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) and a path forward. Attendees at the meeting were:

CAB Members

Jimmy Mackey
Tom Costikyan

Stakeholders

Ann Clark, DHEC
George Minot
Lynn Waishwell, CRESP

DOE/Contractors

Will Callicott, WSRC
Jim Moore, WSRC

Jimmy Mackey, Team B Lead, welcomed those in attendance. It was explained that Julie Corkran, EPA, could not attend the meeting. It was suggested that the next Team B meeting be set up for the Monday night before the CAB meeting for Ms. Corkran's convenience. Mr. Minot asked if the May 24 meeting could be held in the afternoon instead of the evening. Mr. Moore will attempt to schedule the meeting in the afternoon if possible. Mr. Mackey introduced Ann Clark, DHEC, to present the DHEC communications activities.

Ms. Clark stated that DHEC has no comprehensive risk involvement plan because of the diversity of their programs. They handle anything from HIV/AIDS to maternal Health to incinerators to Waste Disposal. Ms. Clark stated that contrary to popular belief, only 17% of DHEC programs were regulatory. That approximately equates to 17% of the people and budget. There are approximately 1000 DHEC employees involved in environmental activities and 6000 involved in the health area. The health area includes programs such as child safety programs and district health clinics.

Ms. Clark explained the answer to the hypothetical question, why doesn't DHEC do risk communication whenever they get a permit application? Ms. Clark stated that DHEC gets approximately 17,000 permit applications per year which would amount to 50 risk communication activities per day, seven days a week. Ms. Clark reviewed the number of permits per department. She stated that DHEC is in the process of posting the permit applications on the WEB.

George Minot asked why there was only one drinking water standard? He stated that at SRS, there was no need to meet the drinking water standard because the water would never be drunk. Ms. Clark said that while there is only one drinking water standard for cleanup activities, DHEC has on a case by case basis delineated particular areas if there are institutional controls. Ms. Clark stated that it is possible to get the groundwater reclassified by getting legislative action. She admitted that the possibility of such legislative action is very slim. The legislature is not willing to change the standard because it would ultimately cause the drinking water to degrade. Lynn Waishwell stated that drinking water standards are set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and you would have to go through EPA to get the standards changed.

Ms. Clark reviewed the risk communication presentation that is given during new DHEC employee training. She indicated that risk equals hazard plus outrage. The outrage part of the equation is the human factor that is subjective. Examples of how outrage is conceived was presented in the following areas:

- Voluntary vs. Involuntary: Cigarette smoking vs. factory smoke, Lead based paint in an old beautiful home vs. lead based paint in military barracks, Radiation from nature vs. radiation from a nuclear plant.
- Familiar vs. Exotic: Household cleaners vs. radiation
- Fair vs. Unfair: Something harmful coming into a community but they don't get anything for it. New mission or increased economics at the site vs. negative benefits down stream.

Other areas of outrage vs. no outrage:

- Certain vs. Uncertain
- Detectable vs. Undetectable
- Trustworthy source vs. Untrustworthy
- Morally irrelevant vs. Morally relevant.
- Process responsive vs. Unresponsive.

Will Callicott asked what was the greatest outrage from the public she had seen since being with DHEC. Ms. Clark said she was invited to New York where they were having a public meeting on sighting a low-level disposal.

Mr. Minot asked Ms. Clark how she would evaluate the success of the fish fact sheet. Ms. Clark said that she would give it a B grade. There was not a lot of after public concern, only 40 phone calls. She said there were some people opposed to handing the fact sheet out and others wanted to knock on every door. Mr. Minot stated he felt DHEC had done a bad job on handing out the fact sheets. Mr. Minot thought that the fact sheets did not hit the target audience. Ms. Clark explained some of the ways the fact sheets were distributed and some of the challenges associated with addressing the different target audiences. Ms. Clark stated that they have had several sessions on lessons learned from the fish fact sheet experience and planned to do follow up. She asked Mr. Minot how the process could be improved. Mr. Minot stated that the emphasis should be on lack of risk.

Ms. Clark pointed out some of the communication activities supported by programs in DHEC. They are attending fairs, working in schools, addressing civic organizations, flyers, bumper stickers, newsletters and fact sheets to name few.

Mr. Mackey thanked Ms. Clark for her presentation and then asked Will Callicott to speak on the roles and activities for the CAB. Mr. Callicott stated that he had attempted to capture some recommendations in three categories: recommendations to DOE, recommendations to the CAB at-large, and good practices. His suggestions were as follows:

Recommendations to DOE:

- Develop a formal communications plan for downstream residents.
- Continue educating the public on incident notifications through the Risk Management and Future Use Subcommittee so that public can see the kind of risk SRS deals with on a day to day basis.
- Make presenters to the CAB aware of communicating risk in their presentations.

Recommendations to the CAB at large:

- Identify spokespersons to counteract negative comments on SRS.

- Develop media packets of CAB members so media would know whom they were and who to call.

Best Practices:

- Have knowledgeable CAB members identified to write letters to the editor and write public opinion columns.
- Have resource material available.

Tom Costikyan suggested that more emphasis should be placed on creating perspective versus talk about the potential disaster. Jimmy Mackey asked who does the public trust to send the message? Lynn Waishwell suggested that an action item might be to determine whom the public trusts, and look at the outrage items in Ann Clark's presentation to determine how to handle the tritium issue. Tom Costikyan stated that the tritium example is an excellent example of the failure of the risk communication program. Will Callicott mentioned that much time and resources could be spent on an issue such as this and there never be an acceptable resolution. There was further discussion on who is a credible source. It was suggested that this team could roll into the CAB Outreach Committee.

The suggested path forward is to write up Team B – Risk Communication – recommendations into a draft and review it at the May 24 meeting in Savannah. The CAB recommendations can either be picked up by the CAB Outreach Committee or the Risk Management and Future Use Subcommittee. The May 21 meeting will be canceled.

With no other comments, Mr. Mackey adjourned the meeting.

Meeting handouts may be obtained by calling 1-800-249-8155.