

4.3 COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

The goal of the community relations plan is to keep the community informed in a way that fosters understanding and encourages regular dialogue. To achieve this goal, a structure has been created for information to flow both to and from the public. To establish that structure, the *who*, the *what*, and the *how* of the information flow must be considered.

Who

The baseline list of participants to be included in the public involvement process will include neighbors (adjacent property owners, Coors Brewing Co. and Shenandoah National Park), Local and State governmental agencies, Merck Plant employees and all those who submitted comments from the Statement of Basis and permit renewal processes. Individuals who would like to be included on the mailing list of communications may contact the Public Affairs Department, Merck & Co., Inc., P.O. Box 7, Elkton, VA 22827 or phone (540) 298-1211.

In addition, the facility has an already established Community Advisory Panel (CAP) that consists of 16 members of the community, including the clergy, representatives of the public school system (high school, middle, and elementary), County Supervisor, Elkton Mayor, representatives of the local business community, a Merck retiree, and fence-line neighbors including the Shenandoah National Park. Merck will solicit feedback from the CAP about additional community members who should be part of the public involvement process of the on-going remediation activities.

What

The overriding topic of interest to the public is as follows:

ISSUE: Implementation of corrective measures to address elevated levels of organic compounds in certain of the on-site bedrock groundwater wells.

As part of the Administrative record, all the information contained in documents submitted to VADEQ (i.e. the RCRA Facility Investigation, the Corrective Measures Study, and the Corrective Measures Implementation submittals) is for public record. The Administrative Record will be maintained in the information repository established at Massanutten Regional

Library and will be the source of information communicated through the Community Relations Plan.

Merck will reserve the right to legitimately determine whether additional requested information is pertinent and relevant to the project. If any requests for information are denied, the rationale for denying the request will be communicated.

How

For employees and retirees, Merck currently uses the plant's newspaper and the Environmental Monthly Topic program (a program in which written information on environmental topics is distributed to the plant) to communicate news on the corrective action program to employees and retirees. Merck has received favorable feedback on these communication tools from the employees and will continue to use them for internal communications.

EPA strongly encourages anyone conducting public participation activities to solicit public input on the types of communication and outreach activities that will work best in each community. Merck will solicit feedback from the CAP on what types of communication and outreach activities they would recommend. Some alternatives for *how* to communicate to the community include:

- progress meetings
- progress reports/newsletters

The RCRA Public Participation Manual (1996) will be used as a guide on how to conduct public participation activities such as disseminating information and gathering and exchanging information. Throughout the public participation process feedback on other methods for exchanging information will be solicited and considered for incorporation into the CRP. These activities are planned to be sources of information in addition to the project documents prepared for the VADEQ and maintained in the Administrative Record.

In addition to the proactive communication activities described in this plan, modifications to the Permit may prompt specific community involvement activities, per VADEQ regulations. These activities may include formal Public Meetings, Public Hearings, and/or notices in a local newspaper initiating public comment periods for regulatory actions.