

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER EDUCATION ABOUT HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- About 40,000 hazardous-waste sites have been reported to the federal government. Additionally, thousands of inadvertent environmental releases of toxins occur each year.
- More than 1,600 hazardous waste sites are included on the National Priorities List (NPL) and are targeted for clean up by the Environmental Protection Agency. About 15 million people live within 1 mile of NPL sites.

WHAT HAS ATSDR ACCOMPLISHED?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) uses many approaches to ensure health education and information to health professionals is nationally attained. ATSDR's activities include grand rounds presentations, off-site seminars and workshops, newsletters, fact sheets, satellite broadcasts, and Web-based training. ATSDR's health-education activities focus on implementing a national strategy to provide environmental health training for nurses and other frontline healthcare providers and expanding partnerships in environmental health expertise.

ATSDR collaborates in many instances with other organizations to strengthen their efforts. Some partners include national organizations, local universities, and professional societies. ATSDR and national partner organizations have made progress in increasing awareness of environmental health by establishing educational infrastructures, developing and distributing educational materials, and implementing community health activities and programs. ATSDR works with 10 national health professional organizations to advance environmental health education.

ATSDR also has developed health-education and promotion partnerships with states, other entities, and tribal governments and consortia through cooperative agreements. These cooperative agreements will help ensure the development of environmental health education and training programs for use by health professionals within tribal communities. In support of health education and training, participants in ATSDR's cooperative agreement program developed 140 different education materials that were distributed to more than 67,000 individuals in 2002. Training was provided to more than 10,000 healthcare professionals.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

ATSDR continues to develop electronic (via the Internet) and distance (via satellite broadcast) training programs to better service the needs of healthcare providers. ATSDR also expects to develop a national measurement protocol to evaluate the level of healthcare professional's expertise in recognizing, diagnosing, and treating exposure-related illness.