

Hanford Openness Workshops *Fact Sheet*

Hanford Openness Workshops

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*The Hanford Openness
Workshops are a
collaborative effort
among the U.S.
Department of Energy-
Richland Operations
Office, the Consortium
for Risk Evaluation
with Stakeholder
Participation, the
Oregon Office of
Energy, the Washington
Department of Ecology,
and regional Tribal
and citizen
representatives.*

Public Involvement

Background

It is the mission of the Hanford Openness Workshops (HOW) to resolve issues impeding the availability of information important to public health, the environment, understanding and decision making at the Hanford Nuclear Site in southeastern Washington state. This Fact Sheet outlines the role that public involvement plays in fostering openness at Hanford.

What is Public Involvement?

Public involvement is providing timely and meaningful opportunities for the public to influence decisions before they are made. Public involvement is at the heart of the Workshop's definition of openness: *fostering and maintaining an open and transparent decision making process in which input from citizens, stakeholders, tribes and others is actively and eagerly sought out and meaningfully considered when decisions are made.* This requires dialogue.

Cleanup at Hanford is governed by the 1989 "Tri-Party Agreement" between the Department of Energy, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. These Tri-Party agencies have a legal responsibility to provide public involvement on issues involving the cleanup of the Hanford Site (see Tri-Party Agreement, Article XLII, www.hanford.gov/tpa/tpa-pt5.html#ARTICLEXLII).

What is Public Information?

Public information is often mistaken for public involvement. Public information is accurate, unbiased information made available to the general public (when information has a bias, it becomes *public relations*, rather than public information). Providing public information is *part* of public involvement, but is *not* the same as offering the public an opportunity to be truly involved. If a decision has already been made and there is no opportunity to change the decision, it is not possible to conduct true public involvement activities related to that decision.

How Should Public Involvement Occur at Hanford?

The Hanford Openness Workshops believe the Tri-Party Agencies must do the following to create meaningful public involvement:

- Clearly define the issue at hand.
- Consult affected governments (including states and tribes/tribal nations).
- Identify what opportunities exist for the public to help influence the issue.
- Work with stakeholders to select the types of public involvement activities needed and the public information materials which need to be developed to support those activities.
- Take a "big picture" look at Hanford, so that public involvement activities are integrated, rather than expecting the public to attend countless meetings on very specific topics.
- Focus on making DOE's decision making process transparent, so members of public can determine how their involvement is affecting outcomes and decisions.
- Improve evaluation and feedback mechanisms for the Public Involvement Program.

Examples of Hanford Public Involvement Activities

- Supporting and being forthright with stakeholder bodies such as the Workshops, the Hanford Advisory Board and the Oregon Hanford Waste Board.
- Conducting public forums (including meetings, hearings, workshops and focus groups) with clear definitions about what is needed from the public.
- One-on-one meetings with interested parties to gain input prior to making decisions.
- Responding to public comments and concerns within 60 days and on an individual basis, when possible. Tell commentors what affect their comments had on the decision.

Examples of Hanford Public Information Activities

- Finding mechanisms to provide information about Hanford to the general public (not just the highly-involved public). This includes providing speakers for civic groups, schools, fairs, professional organizations and any other place where people gather.
- Informational meetings by invitation or advertisement to a variety of groups, individuals and locations.
- Mailings (visually attractive and easy to comprehend, without jargon and acronyms) to interested parties and others including chambers of commerce, civic clubs and schools.
- Information on Internet web sites.

Hanford Public Involvement Resources

- Hanford Update (bi-monthly newsletter) and Hanford Happenings (monthly calendar), call the Hanford Hotline (1-800-321-2008) to be added to the mailing lists.
- Hanford Home Page Public Involvement Section, www.hanford.gov/pubinvolve.html
- Washington State Department of Ecology Nuclear Waste Program Web Site, www.wa.gov/ecology/nwp/public.htm.
- Washington State Department of Health Division of Radiation Protection Web Site, www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/rp/.
- Oregon Office of Energy Nuclear Safety Division Web Site, www.energy.state.or.us/nucsafe/nucsafe.htm.
- Oregon Hanford Waste Board Web Site, www.energy.state.or.us/nucsafe/hwboard.htm.
- Hanford Public Interest Groups web pages, www.hanford.gov/misc_info/hpi.htm.
- Hanford Advisory Board Consensus Advice on Public Involvement: www.hanford.gov/boards/hab/advice/adviceindex.htm.
- Hanford Tri-Party Agreement Public Information Repositories are located at the University of Washington, Gonzaga University, Portland State University and the DOE Public Reading Room.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program can provide funds to citizen groups affected by Superfund sites. Contact the TAG Coordinator at (206) 553-0603.
- Washington State Public Participation Grants facilitate active participation by persons and citizen groups in the investigation and remedial action required due to releases or threatened releases of a hazardous substance. Contact the Solid Waste Financial Assistance Program at (360) 407-6057.

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