Attachment A. ATSDR Cooperative Agreement Program Description

Cooperative Agreement Program

Cooperative Agreements: Funding ATSDR's Partners in Public Health

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Cooperative Agreement Program helps build the capacity of governmental jurisdictions, including states, commonwealths, territories, and tribes, to conduct public health work at toxic waste sites. The primary goal of the cooperative agreement program is to provide each partner with appropriate resources to build and enhance a program's capacity to assess and respond to public health issues related to human exposure to hazardous substances in the environment. Another important goal is for funded programs to integrate their site activities with ATSDR, communities, site managers, and other agencies to maximize collaboration on the development and implementation of effective health intervention strategies.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) created the Superfund for cleaning up certain hazardous waste sites. Through CERCLA and subsequent legislation, ATSDR has developed a comprehensive and dynamic system to address the public health implications of exposure to hazardous substances at waste sites, particularly National Priorities List sites. The agency has provided funding and technical assistance to states to help them develop the capacity to evaluate and identify completed pathways of exposure to site-related contaminants, to provide health education to the community and health professionals about site contamination and health effects, to conduct activities to involve the community in site issues, and to conduct various types of health studies to evaluate whether associations exist between site contaminants and community health outcomes.

Through the funding mechanism, ATSDR has placed and sustained trained staff in state health departments who address a variety of environmental health concerns. These positions include

Annually, ATSDR's Cooperative Agreement Program awards nearly $9 million to support our partners in public health.

- Health scientists who evaluate the human health implications of Superfund and other hazardous waste sites as well as a variety of issues involving toxicologic hazards. These scientists bring skills in risk assessment, toxicology, and epidemiology.
- Health educators, risk communication specialists, and community involvement personnel who (1) assist in researching toxic hazard issues; (2) develop a user-friendly, understandable message; (3) create educational materials and training programs; and (4) generally coordinate effective risk communication strategies around a variety of environmental health issues.
- Epidemiologists who design and conduct epidemiologic studies to evaluate the relation between exposure and disease outcome. They bring advanced research skills and employ a variety of tools, including research and analysis software.

The Cooperative Agreement Program provides grants to 29 partner organizations. Partner programs are funded in the range of $200,000–$800,000, and staffing levels for funded programs range from two to seven positions. Overall, annual ATSDR awards through the Cooperative Agreement Program approach $9 million and support about 100 public health professionals.

To help foster partner program effectiveness and to make continuous improvement in the Cooperative Agreement Program, partners interact directly with ATSDR to report progress and lessons learned.

Quarterly, grant recipients use the HazDat system to update work plans and report accomplishments, thus documenting the public health benefits of activities and programs.

The Cooperative Agreement Program in Action

The following summaries illustrate some of the projects undertaken through Cooperative Agreement Program grants.

Protecting Area Residents from Contaminated Groundwater, Laytonville, California

Acting on recommendations from ATSDR and the California Department of Health Services (CDHS), state officials have taken action to protect people living adjacent to a closed municipal landfill in Laytonville from exposures to contaminated groundwater. CDHS found that long-term exposure to liquid leaking from the edges of the landfill cap could pose a health hazard to nearby residents, members of the Cahto tribe. In addition, ATSDR recommended additional groundwater monitoring. On the basis of CDHS's and ATSDR's recommendations, state officials have ordered a complete overhaul of the failed cap, and additional monitoring wells have been installed. The new cap and wells will help prevent further exposures.

Currently, ATSDR's Cooperative Agreement Program provides grants to 29 partner organizations.

Mitigating Arsenic-Contaminated Soil in Neighborhood Yards, Minneapolis, Minnesota

ATSDR and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) helped mitigate arsenic exposures in a Minnesota neighborhood adjacent to the CMC Lite Yard site. Arsenic-contaminated soil had blown from the site into residential yards. At ATSDR and MDH's recommendation, EPA removed arsenic-contaminated soil from 29 yards where arsenic was present at or above 95 ppm. In addition, MDH asked EPA to consider the site for the National Priorities List and to conduct testing to be sure no other residents are being exposed to the arsenic from the site.

Ensuring Safe Water for Residents of the Cedar Brook Area, Winslow Township, New Jersey

ATSDR and its partner, New Jersey's Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), helped people in the Cedar Brook area of Winslow Township attain safe drinking water. When residents asked for an investigation of well water contamination, DHSS began working with other state and local agencies to test 241 area wells. More than half contained volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and some wells contained nitrate and metals, including lead and mercury.

Treatment systems installed in the area eliminated exposures to VOCs and mercury. Lead and nitrate remained a concern for infants and children, however, so ATSDR and DHSS recommended that safe water be provided to all residents of the area. As a result, a main water line to the area has been installed, and service began in April 2005. DHSS has also determined that past exposures to VOCs posed a public health hazard. This determination gives community members useful information they can share with health care providers in addressing health effects that might be related to the exposures.

Helping State Officials Manage Risk Following a Train Wreck, Graniteville, South Carolina

ATSDR's rapid response helped state health officials protect hundreds of residents from chlorine and sodium hydroxide gas exposures following a freight train collision in Graniteville, South Carolina. By conducting a rapid assessment of the Hazardous Substances Emergency Events Surveillance System database, ATSDR was able to determine injuries and exposures to chlorine gas and sodium hydroxide released from the accident. ATSDR also provided historical information on chlorine gas releases to help the state assess the situation. The severity of the accident led state officials to declare a state of emergency and a mandatory evacuation for residents

in the immediate one-mile area.

ATSDR determined that of the 511 persons examined in emergency departments after exposure to chlorine gas, 69 needed hospitalization. An additional 18 persons were treated at area physician offices. An ongoing assessment is examining the public health impact associated with exposure to chlorine gas and will help ATSDR and other agencies prepare for similar accidents in the future.

Using Health Education to Reduce Blood-Lead Levels, Eureka, Utah

Efforts by the Utah Department of Health and ATSDR have helped decrease average blood-lead levels (BLLs) in children living in Eureka, Utah, where mining activities conducted from 1870 to 1965 resulted in elevated levels of metals in the soil. Children in this community are 10 times more likely to have elevated BLLs (at or above 10 micrograms per deciliter of blood) than children elsewhere in Utah. UDH, in cooperation with ATSDR, has developed a successful new health education program designed to encourage blood-lead testing for residents and to decrease average BLLs in children. The program reaches approximately 110 Eureka Elementary students twice per month. Cleanup by EPA and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality has allowed a return to blood-lead levels below the threshold of health concern. Although average levels in the city's children remain high compared to the state average, blood-lead testing since 2000 indicates that BLLs among children in Eureka have dropped and stabilized.

Pursuing Answers on Tremolite Asbestos, Vermiculite Northwest, Spokane, Washington

Recent work by ATSDR and the Washington State Department of Health (WDOH) at the Vermiculite Northwest site in Spokane, Washington, represents a highly successful collaboration with EPA and the state. EPA's on-scene coordinator asked ATSDR to help evaluate health issues early in the site investigation. Among other findings, the investigation highlighted the need for follow up at this and similar sites when it showed that asbestos in soil samples can become airborne—and inhaled—if the soil is disturbed. Although the most serious exposures occurred in the past, ATSDR's work is helping in the present: education efforts have led community members to self-identify as having been possibly exposed, giving ATSDR and other agencies the opportunity to provide guidance about ways to reduce health risks (for instance, smoking) that heighten the risks associated with asbestos exposure.

Averting Chemical Exposures Following a Coal Tar Spill, Huntington, West Virginia

ATSDR expertise and guidance helped health officials in West Virginia protect people from exposure to benzene, a known carcinogen. On October 28, 2004, a valve on a rail car failed at the TechSol facility in Huntington, West Virginia, spilling 22,000 gallons of coal tar light oil into a creek and storm sewers. The spill forced people in some 500 homes and an elementary school to evacuate. To ensure that people returning to their homes would be safe, the West Virginia Cooperative Partners Program (WVCPP), an ATSDR partner, and county health officials determined safe reoccupancy levels and conducted indoor air tests. As a result of this guidance and action, most of those evacuated were able to return two days later. WVCPP is now working with the community to address concerns about exposure, and cleanup of the creek continues.

Through Cooperative Agreements, ATSDR helps support a variety of local public health professionals, including health scientists, epidemiologists, health educators, and others.

Protecting People from Hazardous Indoor Air, Beloit, Wisconsin

Wisconsin's Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) and ATSDR helped a business owner in Beloit protect people from breathing hazardous levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Investigating odor complaints from occupants of a building, state health officials detected high levels of VOCs in the

air. The VOCs, apparently from fuel oil-contaminated water seeping into the basement, posed an intermittent, short-term health hazard when vapors from the basement entered the main building. DHFS consulted with the building's owners and recommended interim measures to prevent exposures. The suspected source, an underground fuel oil tank on an adjoining property, is now slated for removal. Health officials will follow up to ensure that the measures were effective.

For more information, contact ATSDR toll-free at 1-888-42ATSDR (1-888-422-8737), or visit the ATSDR Web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov.

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