



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Outreach Subcommittee

Meeting Summary

June 20, 1997

Erhardt, S.C.

The Outreach Subcommittee met on June 20, 1997, in Erhardt, S.C. Members in attendance included Brendolyn Jenkins and Ed Tant. Board facilitator Walt Joseph and Board administrator Dawn Haygood also attended. Shelley Phipps of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control was also present. Razzie Jenkins participated from the general public. Gerri Flemming attended as the Associate Designated Federal Official.

Dr. Jan Temple of the Medical University of South Carolina provided a presentation on an Environmental Justice Risk Communication Initiative at SRS (see attached). The goal of this project was to demonstrate proactive commitment and increased sensitivity to the principles of environmental justice as desired in Executive Order 12898. The project was completed in two phases. The first phase identified community specific environmental health risks through focus group studies. Phase II utilized the focus group findings as a foundation to design and deliver information back to the targeted communities.

Phase I consisted of twelve focus groups in four communities surrounding SRS. Three focus groups were conducted in Barnwell, Jackson and New Ellenton, S.C. and Waynesboro, Ga. One focus group consisted of minority participants, one consisted of non-minority participants and one group was racially-mixed. Focus group participants were paid \$25 and recruited through advertising, flyers, community television and radio spots, direct mail and community member assistance. Gaining assistance from a community member was very effective, she said.

Dr. Temple discussed key findings of the focus group meetings. She stated that according to meeting participants, there is clearly an issue of public health education to be addressed. The types of health concerns most mentioned included fear of cancer, allergies and pesticides. Other health concerns were regarding stress due to downsizing. She stated that not one of the focus group participants contributed health concerns to lifestyle choice. The second area of concern identified are environmental issues, particularly concern for the water and air. She stated there is a perception that the emissions from the site are causing allergies.

Other concerns identified include emergency preparedness, lack of trust, and the fact that no one understands the site's current mission, said Dr. Temple. She stated the workforce is a key conduit for information to the communities being overlooked by SRS. Individuals were not aware tours were available and most focus group participants stated they received information through the media, although they did not always trust the media. Dr. Temple stated the majority of participants were also unaware of the Citizens Advisory Board.

Dr. Temple discussed communication techniques and stated that public meetings were not for the low income and minority communities. She stated individuals are fearful of these structured meetings and that public speaking tops the list of what people fear most. She also stated that SRS has to go to the communities, not expect them to come to Aiken or North Augusta. She stated another perception of the focus group participants is that of hiring practices and the fact that they did not feel they could get jobs at SRS.

Dr. Temple discussed the advisory committee formed to oversee the entire risk communication project. She discussed interface with appropriate boards such as the Centers for Disease Control Health Effects Subcommittee and the need to communicate the results of the project. A separate technical committee helped to design and develop Phase II of the project, which consisted of community specific risk communication programs. These project tasks were completed from January - May, 1997. A Risk Communication team was composed and health and environmental meetings were conducted. SCDHEC participated in all of the meetings to provide a level of confidence for the public regarding the data being presented.

Dr. Temple stated that Phase II was based on the findings of Phase I and focused on what the communities wanted to know. This was necessary to validate the communities feelings and concerns and to build trust by showing that they were following through on Phase I of the project. Health meetings were held in January-February 1997 and focused on the Cancer Incidence Report released by the Savannah River Region Health Information Systems. From April-May 1997, environmental meetings were conducted to discuss the current mission of SRS, the 1995 Environmental Report, radiation's impact on air and water. Dry runs were held and site personnel were trained for these meetings. She discussed a "parking lot" technique utilized at the meetings in which all attendees concerns were captured on a flip chart to be addressed either at the meeting or following the meeting. This served to validate the public's concern, but allow them to focus on the meeting topic at hand. Dr. Temple stated this technique of capturing peripheral concerns was very effective and valued by the community.

Dr. Temple stated that overall, the project had limited participation by low-income and minority communities and that those communities with a key community liaison had higher turn out rates. The entire project, which was funded under a grant from the Department of Energy, cost \$144,800, she said. However, she questioned whether attendance at meetings should be considered as a criteria for measuring effectiveness of the project.

Dr. Temple challenged the Citizens Advisory Board to ensure SRS management has a genuine interest in communicating to low income and minority communities. She stated that requesting implementation of Executive Order 12898 is like telling a kid to go clean their room. (e.g. A parents perception of clean may be very different than a child's perception.) However, risk perception research is a validated science, she stated. She encouraged the Board to look at its own communication mechanisms and address two-way communication with the general public.

Discussion revolved around SRS and CAB public participation efforts. It was noted that getting the public involved can sometimes be frustrating since most members of the public choose not to participate. Issues relating to economic impacts and perceived public health risks do tend to draw

a crowd, but generally the public does not choose to become involved in the day-to-day activities of the site.

Subcommittee members received a draft CAB brochure for review and comment and agreed to conduct a follow-up subcommittee meeting prior to the July Board meeting to continue discussions on communication efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

(The next Outreach Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for July 10 at 11 a.m. at the Ryans Family Steakhouse in Aiken, S.C.)

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