

**CAP COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE BROADER COMMUNITY:
CREDIBILITY, CREATIVITY, PRACTICALITY**

**CMA Building Communities Together Workshop
The Woodlands, Texas
October 13-14, 1995**

assembled by
**Diane Sheridan, Workshop Facilitator
1107 Live Oak Lane
Taylor Lake Village, Texas 77586-4530
713/326-5253 (phone)
713/326-2769 (FAX)
DBSheridan@aol.com**

CAP outreach to the broader community is challenging in many ways. The CAP must be seen as credible. It must also produce materials acceptable to its diverse membership in a timely fashion. It faces the frustrations all groups do in getting information to a broad audience. With these challenges in mind, three workshop sessions brought participants together in an interactive setting to share their experience and creativity.

Participants worked in small groups pretending they were a CAP and either creating a broad program for CAP communications or designing a specific outreach activity. Ideas from all work groups are accumulated below. Unfortunately, a few flip chart pages were missing. This summary is offered in hopes it will make it easier for real CAPs to improve their communications with the broader community.

**CRITERIA FOR, OR CHARACTERISTICS OF,
A GOOD CAP COMMUNICATION PROGRAM**

- defines key objectives
- creates trust
- achieves and maintains credibility
- rests on a diverse CAP membership so ideas are brought to the table from the broad community and the CAP can reach out to those constituencies
- responds to *community* interests
- demonstrates changes made as a result of the CAP's work
- shares plant data to show whether CAP is effective in bringing about change

DSW 137284

- provides for feedback from public and response by CAP or company as appropriate
- results in meaningful feedback from a broad spectrum of constituents
- is ongoing
- includes multiple methods for reaching public
- focuses on quality (understanding the significance of the message) not just quantity
- uses lay terms and clear, direct, objective language; simple messages; a limited number of messages
- picks target audiences and reaches them; is able to explain why the audience is targeted
- establishes a network of stakeholders who will get information out to others
- determines what the CAP should communicate versus what the company should communicate
- has the resources needed (opportunities as well as financial)
- can be tested by asking neighbors if they have heard of the CAP and its work
- produces a community that recognizes and is familiar with the CAP and its members
- collects data on effectiveness

GOALS VARIOUS GROUPS SUGGESTED FOR A BROAD COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

- to identify audiences and be sure they are diverse
- to provide a broad and continuing awareness of the CAP and company and their activities
- to advertise that the CAP exists, what its function and mission are, and who its members are; to explain the diversity of the members and identify CAP goals
- to provide feedback from community to company
- to provide for two-way communication with community
- to communicate about *community* needs and concerns

- to present the facts and represent all sides of issues
- to be sure lay people know what industry is doing, and its impacts and implications (both positive and negative)
- to use terms lay people understand
- to convey that the CAP is not a puppet of the company
- to provide such information to the most people at the least cost

POSSIBLE TARGET AUDIENCES FOR A BROAD COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

- community within "close" proximity to facility--those who work there as well as those who live there
- set a radius based on the kind of population (metropolitan or rural) and considering the area that could be impacted by an event and the area that is economically impacted (jobs, taxes)
- company employees
- media
- churches, church group meetings
- service groups
- stores where people assemble such as the convenience store, where things can be put on video
- people attending community events where CAP can have a booth
- schools, kids, and parents
- colleges
- military installations
- rural residents
- skeptics and rumormongers
- any stakeholder who could be affected by plant operations

POSSIBLE VEHICLES FOR A BROAD COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

- one-on-one, person-to-person (slow but effective)
- word of mouth
- one-on-one ambassadors
- door-to-door visits
- public forums
- town meetings
- speakers bureau, presentations, including schools, churches, and senior citizen centers
- PTA
- facility open houses
- plant tours
- community events such as country fair, Earth Day celebrations, etc.
- visitor center
- displays, including displays at mall
- direct mailings
- advertising
- flyers
- newspapers (regional and local and neighborhood)
- print and broadcast media, including radio talk shows, newspapers, television
- joint ventures with other CAPs

DSW 137287

PLANS FOR A CAP QUARTERLY REPORT IN THE NEWSPAPER

- content develop by CAP Communications Subcommittee to cover CAP activities and accomplishments in response to community concerns and to provide a list of CAP members, PO Box, FAX and hotline number so public can address concerns to CAP
 - written by facilitator with input from CAP
 - edited by company communications department
 - draft approved by CAP
 - final copy prepared by company communications department
 - final approval given by CAP at their next meeting
 - distributed to newspaper by company communications department
 - funded by company
-

PLANS FOR A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPER

- do jointly with neighboring CAP
- publish monthly (10x per year, after CAP meets); continue normal news release
- publish as an *insert* in the community newspaper
- written by a third party
- reviewed by CAP members and companies
- printed and distributed by newspaper
- paid for by companies
- content to include
 - article recapping each meeting
 - Q&A column with questions raised by CAP, and answers
 - point/counterpoint opinion article by members and/or company
 - detail on issues
 - photos and drawings

DSW 137288