

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

AGENCY SNAPSHOT

Mandate - The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment -- air, water, and land -- upon which life depends.

Overview of EPA - EPA is the lead federal agency for educating the public on environmental issues and enforcing environmental laws. Since the agency was established 30 years ago, the United States has experienced dramatic improvements such as:

- 92% of all American households have tap water clean enough to drink
- Two-thirds of the nation's waters are safe for fishing and swimming
- Today's automobiles are 95% cleaner than those in 1970
- Lead levels in the air have decreased by 98%; lead levels in children's blood has decreased by 75%
- Half of all Superfund site clean-ups have been completed
- Promoting environmental justice is now part of each government agency's mission
- Since the cancer-causing pesticide DDT was banned, a number of rare animal species are recovering in their natural habitat and have been removed from the Endangered Species list (such as the bald eagle)
- Recycling activities, including composting and curbside collections, now diverts 57 million tons of material away from landfills and incinerators
- The use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which deplete the ozone layer, has declined by 99%
- More than 15 million homes have been tested for radon, a leading cause of lung cancer, and 1.6 million new homes are built with radon-resistant features
- The federal government, the largest purchaser of goods and services in the nation, is required to make environmentally-preferable products its first choice
- Energy Star programs are saving consumers more than \$4 billion in energy bills each year, which saves the average household \$400 annually

EPA's headquarters is located in Washington, DC and there are ten regional offices (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Dallas, San Francisco, and Seattle) and several laboratories nationwide. EPA has approximately eighteen thousand employees, and over 5% of this workforce are Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders.

The agency's budget of more than \$7 billion (FY2000) is primarily distributed to state, local, and tribal governments, as well as to research institutions and non-profit organizations to promote public health and environmental efforts. EPA programs foster activities such as research, education and outreach, technical assistance, and small business opportunities.

EPA provides up-to-date information on the state of the environment, such as air and water quality in areas around the country. Communities can also find out when toxic chemicals are used

and released into the air and water. Access to this environmental information helps communities make informed decisions to improve the health and well-being of their residents.

EPA is collecting information on programs and services that could meet the needs of the AAPI community. It is important to note that although the agency does not have programs designed exclusively for the AAPI population, there are several examples of AAPI-specific activities within EPA's established programs and services.

Current Selected EPA Activities Affecting AAPIs - The following list highlights some examples of EPA's current program activities for AAPIs.

A. Direct Services - Environmental Programs

- EPA Region 9's Pacific Insular Area Program is the focal point for Pacific Islander efforts. Region 9 (San Francisco) also manages an annual consolidated program to insular area environmental protection agencies with considerable flexibility in program design and priority setting, and sponsors an annual environmental conference for Pacific Islanders.
- The Superfund Program offers site clean-up, technical assistance, and community outreach to AAPI areas affected by hazardous waste contamination. Superfund sites have affected AAPI populations particularly in Regions 1, 4, and 9. Fact sheets, advisories, and posted warning signs are translated into several languages, including Vietnamese, Hmong, Khmer, Laotian, and Chinese.
- The Office of Water, in cooperation with the U.S. Public Health Service, developed and published the brochure *Should I Eat the Fish I Catch?* in Hmong language. This brochure provides information to consumers about how to reduce their exposure to the contaminants found in the fish they eat. A letter transmitting these brochures was mailed to all members of the American Academy of Pediatricians, the American Academy of OBGYNs, and the American Academy of Family Physicians and certain health organizations such as women and infant clinics (WICs). Up to 1 million of these brochures have been distributed to health care providers and other health care organizations nationwide.
- The Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances established the Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBT) Initiative and the Mercury Action Plan which are geared toward overall reduction of mercury in the environment. This should help reduce the risk to AAPIs from eating mercury-contaminated fish which are caught non-commercially.
- The Lead Program has a very strong education campaign aimed at the abatement worker community, and at parents, particularly those in low income residential areas where lead paint and pipes are prevalent.
- The Design for the Environment (DfE) Program provides information on the potential health risks (due to chemical exposure) to shopworkers and the surrounding communities. DfE was

instrumental in educating the drycleaning industry on the health impacts from exposure to perchloroethylene (“perc” - a possible carcinogen and neurotoxin). More than one-third of all shop owners and workers are Korean. Project findings, technical information, and other key outreach materials were translated into Korean (e.g., “Plain Korean Guide to Perc Use”). Since 1995 there has been a 60% decline in perc usage.

- EPA regions conduct pesticides education and outreach sessions, and develop educational materials written in AAPI languages about the safe use of pesticides in the home.
- The Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances? Farm Workers Protection Program requires farm owners to communicate pesticide safety information to all workers. Warning signs are posted at points of entry to pesticide treated fields, including translations in Korean, Cambodian, Laotian, Tagalog, Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese.

B. Procurement and Assistance Programs (Contracting and Grant Opportunities)

- The Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances awards grants AAPI community and business organizations for pollution prevention activities.
- The Office of Air and Radiation awarded a grant to the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) to reduce risk from indoor air pollutants in AAPI communities. This grant raises awareness about indoor air pollution and provides skills and resources to community-based organizations that serve AAPI needs. These activities include translation of outreach brochures, distribution of radon test kits (technical assistance and results provided), and training on indoor air quality issues. Several documents and public service announcements are translated into Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese.
- Through the Office of Water’s Nonpoint Source Program, grants are allocated to Hawaii, Northern Marianas, American Samoa, Guam, and Palau. These grants support a wide variety of activities including technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring to assess the progress of nonpoint source implementation projects.
- Information on contracting opportunities and requirements are provided at small business fairs throughout the country and through EPA’s Web site.

C. Educational Programs

- The Nevada Fuel Emissions Laboratory’s student program provides outreach to AAPI communities. Ten percent of the students are AAPIs.
- The Office of Air Radiation’s Indoor Air Program established the Alliance for Learning and Vision of Under-represented Americans (ALAV) which supports local AAPI students attending the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

D. Employment Opportunities and Career Advancement

- Through the agency's Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) Program grants are awarded to organizations for retired persons, including National Asian Pacific Center for Aging. NAPCA employs grantees in a variety of activities from clerical to professional services (e.g., engineers, chemists, statisticians, etc.). The SEE Program utilizes the skills and expertise of retired and unemployed older Americans, and enables them to contribute to the workforce.
- The Office of Civil Rights' Affirmative Employment Program established a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) for Asian-Pacific American Employment. A national SEP manager provides advice and assistance to agency management, and coordinates activities such as internal networking, community outreach, education/training, and recruitment. There is a SEP Program in each main office in headquarters and in each of EPA's regions and laboratories.
- The agency officially recognizes the Asian Pacific American Council (APAC), a non-labor employee group, and supports APAC activities to promote awareness of diversity issues. Activities include sponsoring the annual Asian Pacific Cultural Heritage Month events and providing career advancement training. APAC has over 450 members, representing 50% of all AAPI employees.

Preliminary Projected EPA Activities Affecting AAPIs - EPA plans to broaden its programs and services to meet the special needs and cultural sensitivities of minority populations. The following list highlights some examples of EPA's preliminary projections for activities to address AAPI needs.

A. Direct Services - Environmental Programs

- The Office of Water, in cooperation with other EPA offices, is planning a National Risk Communication Conference to be held during the summer of 2000. The conference will consider communication methods on environmental risks that are most effective in reaching ethnically and economically diverse populations.
- The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response will participate in a Multicultural Career Fair sponsored by the University of Maryland at their College Park campus and a similar fair at the Baltimore County campus.
- The Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances will provide technical assistance and training on the use of exposure models and other risk assessment/management tools for communities and local governments with large AAPI populations.

- Region 9 (San Francisco) will continue to manage the consolidated program for insular area environmental protection agencies and will sponsor the annual environmental conference for Pacific Islanders.

B. Procurement and Assistance Programs (Contracting and Grant Opportunities)

- The Office of Air and Radiation plans to renew the AAPCHO grant to develop education and training curriculum focused on asthma management.

C. Educational Programs

- EPA supports all ongoing student and intern programs, particularly those that encourage minority students.
- EPA plans to diversify support for educational institutions to reflect the needs of minority communities. The agency welcomes suggestions on developing criteria to identify schools and Asian serving institutions that warrant financial support.

D. Employment Opportunities and Career Advancement

- The Office of Civil Rights and the Asian Pacific American Council expect to issue a draft report in May 2000 on the job satisfaction of AAPI employees. The survey is a snapshot of the current conditions and satisfaction of employment and identifies ways to support diversity within the agency

EPA is actively supporting and participating in the White House Initiative for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) to increase the AAPI participation in EPA programs, services, and other environmental activities where they may be underserved.

Additional information on the agency's AAPI initiative will be available in the future through the EPA Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/aapi>