

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Comments on the EPA's Review of the 1981 Public Participation Policies (FRL-6482-1)

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For the last two years I have been working with low income and minority neighborhoods of Cleveland on environmental and health issues: providing information resources, tools and training for communities to better address environmental justice and pollution prevention issues.

I have a few comments on the issue of how the public can be engaged further (elements of a strategy)?

1. Broad inclusion and community revitalization for promoting *environmental justice* (EJ) cannot happen in the current EPA infrastructure for public participation.

As a community organizer, I have found my resources to be often limited while preparing for an upcoming hearing for a case that may be potentially an environmental justice one. USEPA's Region V office does not have an infrastructure to assist community workers like myself prior to a hearing to organize information to get an assessment of low-income and minority make-up of the affected community as well as its existing pollution burdens. The case in point is an Ohio EPA hearing for draft Title V permit for the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company's (CEI) Lake Shore Power Plant held on July 6, 1999. Enclosed is also a letter I wrote to the Ohio EPA director, Chris Jones, after the hearing. The letter highlights some key elements in the context of public participation.

2. "The promise of public participation is the promise of revitalization of democracy" says Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and President of PolicyLink, a national institution advancing policies

and practices to improve low-income people's lives, and building strong communities.

I would also like to cite the results of a random survey of 100 residents in Oct. '98 done as part of the USEPA's EMPACT (Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking) initiative. The targeted communities were from low-income and minority neighborhoods in Cleveland (*Jan 7 1999. EMPACT Population Communications Characteristics and Outreach Strategy Report*). Here are some results from this survey:

1. The average inner city resident is unaware of the health-environment linkage (<15% cited awareness).
2. The crush of daily events makes this issue unlikely to rise to the level of functioning awareness without an extraordinary communication effort.
3. The electronic media (TV and radio) emerged as the major channels of daily information entering the household (>85% cited these as one of their primary information sources).

I have not seen any announcements on TV about an upcoming hearing or meeting.

A letter from Ohio EPA informing us of the CEI hearing on July 6, reached us on Friday July 2, 1999. It was postmarked June 30th, 1999. We are not the only group to have had this experience. We had requested a notification way back in March. I urge the EPA not only to provide timely notifications to community workers like myself but to also announce the comment periods and hearings on TV and radio to get community participation.

3. I applaud the idea of a "contact list" in the identification of affected communities as mentioned on page 10. I would like to see its implementation. Many key community residents/activists work in the day time and are only available later in the evening (after 7 pm). I request that EPA programs, meetings, trainings, be held in the evenings to make them accessible to neighborhood leaders.

4. On Page 11 of the EPA document under the subtitle "Outreach", the document emphasizes that EPA shall "provide policy, program, and technical information at the earliest practical times, and at places easily accessible to interested and affected persons and organizations, so they can make informed and constructive contributions to decision-making. Information and

educational programs shall be developed....." I am happy that these needs have been identified but I want to mention that none of these initiatives, if they have been implemented, have reached the low-income and minority neighborhoods I have been working with in Cleveland. I would like to suggest that churches and community centers, Healthy Family Healthy Start Programs, Headstart programs/centers, citizens' councils are the most accessible places for communities to access technical information and notifications. As a new member of the Lee Seville Miles Citizens' Council in the south-east side of Cleveland, I am concerned at the lack of access to trainings and technical assistance available to this low-income and minority community. Cleveland State University publishes annually a directory of neighborhood-based organizations in Cleveland. This directory and such documents should be actively sought out and used by the EPA to better inform and involve neighborhood communities in Cleveland Ohio and elsewhere.

Christopher Jones, Director
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
4900 WaterMark Dr.
PO. Box 1049
Columbus OH 43216-1049

Re: Draft Title V Permit13-18-00-0245
Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. Lake Shore Plant

July 9, 1999

Dear Director Jones,

I am writing to express my disappointment and fatigue after the public hearing on July 6, 1999 on the draft Title V permit for the Cleveland Electric Illuminating (CEI) Company's Lake Shore Power Plant. I request you to kindly give your attention to the issues mentioned here. They are important in my opinion, if a public hearing and public participation is to have any meaning in the future. Mr. Gallaway who conducted the hearing, suggested I talk to you.

First, staff sent out to conduct the hearing should have a better grasp of the issues that are associated with a hearing in the nature of the one on July 6, 1999. Mr. Gallaway was unable to respond to citizens' questions regarding windows for citizens' participation to better address environmental justice

issues. Neither he nor Mr. Vilem from the City of Cleveland's Bureau of Air Pollution Control, had any definite idea about the next steps after the hearing, when would citizens hear from them, where their testimony would go, and what the rest of the process was. They held up a Title V fact sheet without any concrete information to give us. This kind of a situation is not only disrespecting of those who work so hard to attend the hearing, but also of the process of citizens' participation in a permit program that affects citizens' health, environment and quality of life. In addition, Roland Lacey, the Lake Shore Plant engineer, was not even present at the hearing.

Second, the hearing should be better publicized. It costs \$70 to subscribe to your publication of the hearing schedule. No one should be expected to access it.

A letter from Ohio EPA informing us of the hearing, reached us on Friday July 2, 1999 (copy enclosed). It was postmarked June 30th, 1999. We are not the only group to have had this experience. We had requested a notification way back in March (copy of letter enclosed).

An effort should also be made to reach out to the affected communities through the radio and TV. In this context, I would also like to cite the results of a random survey of 100 residents last fall as part of the USEPA's EMPACT (Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking) initiative. The targeted communities were low-income and minority neighborhoods in Cleveland including two within a two-mile radius of the Lake Shore Plant (*Jan 7 .1999. EMPACT Population Communications Characteristics and Outreach Strategy Report*). Here are the results of the survey:

1. The average inner city resident is unaware of the health-environment linkage (<15% cited awareness).
2. The crush of daily events makes this issue unlikely to rise to the level of functioning awareness without an extraordinary communications effort.
3. The electronic media (TV and radio) emerged as the major channels of daily information entering the household (>85% cited these as one of their primary information sources).
4. In excess of 20% of all households had at least one diagnosed respiratory health issue that could be exacerbated by ozone or particulates.

I am not asking the EPA for new and creative ways to reach out to all communities for a public hearing. It is urgent and important that at least the regular channels of communications be utilized if a public comment period/public hearing is to have any meaning for us as activists, and for the affected populations. Environmental Justice can never be realized unless the affected communities come to the table where decisions that affect their environment, health and quality of life are being made.

Third, for future summer hearings, the venue should have air conditioning. It was the fourth consecutive *Ozone Action Day* on July 6 and all attendees, many of them senior citizens, were very uncomfortable. Also, noisy fans made it impossible to hear the testimonies.

Thanking You for your attention.
Sincerely,

Anjali T. Mathur
Sustainable Cleveland Partnership
Project Director