

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
EPA Response to Haiti Earthquake - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region II

Subject: POLREP #10
EPA Response to Haiti Earthquake

Port-au-Prince, HT
Latitude: 18.5394190 Longitude: -72.3367230

To:
From: Planning Section Chief, Haiti Disaster Response, Region II REOC
Date: 3/12/2010
Reporting Period:

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:	Contract Number:
D.O. Number:	Action Memo Date:
Response Authority:	Response Type:
Response Lead:	Incident Category:
NPL Status:	Operable Unit:
Mobilization Date:	Start Date:
Demob Date:	Completion Date:
CERCLIS ID:	RCRIS ID:
ERNS No.:	State Notification:
FPN#:	Reimbursable Account #:

1.1.1 Incident Category

Earthquake disaster.

1.1.2 Site Description

Site conditions remain as previously reported.

1.1.2.1 Location

Republic of Haiti, all areas.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

Threats are being assessed for possible future assignments.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

On February 1, 2010, EPA received a request for assistance from the Department of Defense Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). SOUTHCOM requested EPA assistance in the Haiti recovery efforts. They specifically wanted the agency to participate in a Joint Task Force (JTF) to develop an assessment of environmental needs for Haiti, for both the short and long term. The EDIFY will be comprised of other federal partners. SOUTHCOM has contacted the DOE, DOT/CG, US-AID and USEPA. EPA Region 2 has deployed a second team of two OSCs for a 30 day tour to support this effort. The overall effort will continue to focus on providing recommendations on various matters of public health, such as housing location assessments, identifying potential debris staging areas, solid waste disposal, medical waste disposal, biological waste disposal, asbestos material management, and possible radioactive waste retrieval/disposal.

The JTF continues to assess critical needs and make recommendations to administer immediate assistance to help prevent further loss of life and the deterioration of human health. Although the current mission is dynamic and broad in scope, because of the enormity and scale of the tragedy EPA personnel are helping to identify potential areas that may be critical or more properly part of a longer term recovery effort. EPA is conducting environmental assessments as requested and continues to make recommendations to the JTF and the Haitian government.

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

As of this report date the JTF has visited and assessed additional locations for possible use as debris staging and/or disposal areas. Recommendations have been made through the JTF on such matters as solid waste disposal, siting of public housing, contamination from mass grave sites, plastic container recycling, medical waste disposal, and inspections of the container port area for hazardous materials and oil spills.

Continuing concerns are for construction debris landfills and disposal of solid & medical waste. Information on portable med waste incinerators and refuse compactors (for plastic bottles) has been given to the next EPA contingent due to leave for Haiti on March 13th.

Our largest task, an Environmental Assessment (EA) review for all debris management activities performed by USAID or its partners, was completed this week. This extensive document covers a "cradle to grave" evaluation of debris management, from the debris source (damaged buildings/homes), transportation issues, debris management procedures, and final disposal sites. It examines the possible human and environmental impacts and what mitigation actions (best management practices) should be followed by US government Agencies and their contractors to ensure human and environmental impacts are minimized. The document covers all types of debris, including medical waste, HAZMAT, solid waste, and organic refuse.

EPA responders also provided advice on a Biogas project to assist SouthCom and US AID with sanitation issues at the settlement camps. Many Haitians will be relocated in the next 30-60 days and there are no proper sewage treatment/disposal facilities in Haiti. Biogas production, using human waste to anaerobically produce methane for use as cooking fuel or producing electricity, is widely used in undeveloped countries on a small scale.

EPA responders visited a debris management site at the Verraux Port Site, known as the Port Site. US AID awarded a debris management contract to a US contractor to manage all incident debris deposited to this facility. The contractor set up site security but has not fully mobilized. They will separate all debris and temporarily store any garbage, refuse, HAZMAT, medical waste, etc. for subsequent disposal. All clean debris (concrete, brick, rebar, etc) will be staged for jetty construction. EPA has advised USAID on this process and recommended USACE provide the engineering design to ensure the jetty construction is suitable for the location.

2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

n/a

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

<i>Waste Stream</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Manifest #</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Disposal</i>
N/A					

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

EPA responders are providing initial environmental assessments, developing environmental strategies/plans, and working as part of an interagency Joint Task Force to provide short and long term environmental recommendations.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Working with the other Task Force members, EPA is scoping potential mission areas and will identify issues where assistance may be provided. EPA will continue to coordinate actions with the Task Force agencies and the Haitian government as necessary.

As of February 23, 2010, EPA reps have been part of the JTF assessing potential locations for construction debris placement/disposal. Other problems the JTF is looking into is disposal of human waste, short and long term solutions to a growing mass of solid waste, in particular plastic bottles. The lack of clean water (other than plastic containers) is also linked to a need for infrastructure repair for public drinking water supplies. The JTF is working with the DOD and the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) in these regards.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

EPA Region II and EPA HQ will continue to plan and implement support of the response effort for Haiti. A potential problem with disposal of millions of empty plastic water bottles is rapidly becoming a very real problem. The JTF has requested EPA assistance to address recycling of plastic waste.

Scanning debris and rubble for radiation, evaluating possible public housing locations, medical waste disposal, resumption of port operations, and other public health matters are coming to the forefront.

EPA Region II has completed plans to deploy a second team of OSCs to Haiti. OSC Mike Brescio and OSC Jeff Bechtel will depart for Haiti on March 13, 2010 for a 30-day deployment.

2.2.2 Issues

From a Regional perspective, funding source(s) will be needed to support Regional participation in the response past the initial 30 day deployment period.

2.3 Logistics Section

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Southern Command will continue to provide logistical support (security, food, sanitation) for EPA staff. As of this week all responders, including those from back-up EPA Regions, will be briefed in the Region II Regional Response Center in Edison, NJ prior to flying to Haiti. Effective 3/10/10 SouthernCommand has discontinued military flights to and from Haiti for EPA personnel. EPA responders will use commercial carriers into and out of Haiti.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

A pre-deployment Health and Safety briefing package has been developed. A written medical clearance procedure has been drafted. A Health & Safety Plan has been developed based upon anticipated mission activities and will be revised as the mission and areas of operation are developed. CISM briefing was initiated by the Region II CISM team and responders were provided pre-deployment materials regarding stress and health maintenance.

Reports of isolated occurrences of malaria among off-Island responders turned out to be incorrect. The disease was diagnosed as Leptospirosis, a debilitating bacterial infection that exhibits flu-like symptoms. This is a non-fatal disease that is readily controlled by doxycycline which is already being used by responders as an anti-malarial med.

Malaria continues to be a very real threat, although no cases have been publicly reported. Region II has reminded it's personnel to take anti-malarial medication as *exactly* prescribed. In addition, the second EPA team deploying to Haiti have been issued fully encapsulating mosquito nets for their cots and mosquito repellant for personal use.

With the onset of the rainy season a whole host of potential health and safety threats come to mind. This includes flash floods, insect swarms, road wash-outs, mudslides, and mold growth.

All documents not containing personal information are posted on the www.epaosc.org website.

2.6 Liaison Officer

The Region II Planning Section Chief is fulfilling the position of Liaison Officer with other agencies.

2.7 Information Officer

2.7.1 Public Information Officer

All information concerning potential deployment to Haiti are being handled through the Region II REOC and informational updates by DHS are being posted on the www.epaosc.org Haiti earthquake response website.

EPA public affairs contact information was provided to SOUTHCOM so that external communications can be coordinated.

2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator

None at this time.

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

n/a

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

EPA will provide assistance to other federal agencies (DOD, ACOE, FEMA, USCG, etc.) as requested.

4. Personnel On Site

EPA personnel are OSC Michael Solecki and ERT staff member Alan Humphrey. They arrived in Haiti on February 16, 2010. OSCs Jeff Bechtel and Mike Brescio will deploy to Haiti on March 13, 2010. OSC Solecki and ERT Alan Humphrey will depart Haiti on March 17, 2010, allowing for a 3 - 4 day transition period.

EPA responders are asked to communicate with the Region II REOC as often as conditions permit. Due to time constraints, mission requirements, and extremely poor communications, maintaining a strict coms plan has proved to be very difficult.

Communication between the REOC and ground personnel continue to be sporadic at best. Communication by e-mail seems to be the best means of passing information between field personnel and the REOC, but that too is of limited availability at the US Embassy grounds.

5. Definition of Terms

n/a

6. Additional sources of information

6.1 Internet location of additional information/report

<http://www.epaosc.org>. Click on " Web Sites", then "Region II". Scroll down to "Haiti Response" and click on that link.

6.2 Reporting Schedule

Due to the somewhat routine nature of the information/feedback the REOC has been getting from our responders, and the difficulty obtaining updated information, effective March 5, 2010 ,SITREPs will be issued once a week on Friday. If the response situation dictates otherwise, SITREPSs will be issued more frequently. If something extraordinary occurs a SPECIAL SITREP will be issued for that particular event.

7. Situational Reference Materials

Situational updates provided by DHS are posted on the www.epa.osc website.