

**Department of Environmental Quality  
The Dow Chemical Company**

**Dow Off-Site Corrective Action  
Proposed Ongoing Community Involvement Process  
June 14, 2005**

**INTRODUCTION**

Communities from Midland to the Saginaw Bay face challenges caused by elevated levels of dioxins and furans in the environment. These challenges will be difficult at times and some will require long-term effort to resolve. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and The Dow Chemical Company (Dow) are committed to efforts that address these challenges in ways that reduce potential exposure, protect public health, and benefit both the environment and the economy. To achieve this goal, the DEQ and Dow must actively and effectively involve the affected communities, including all those interested in the future of the region.

To encourage this necessary involvement, the DEQ and Dow are proposing a variety of ways to relay information and gather input from the affected communities. We hope that these efforts will serve to inform the community, improve decisions, and build trust among all involved parties. Together, we refer to these activities as the “ongoing community involvement process.”

Our proposal should be recognized as a first step. It is based on suggestions and comments made during the four convening meetings that were held in March and April 2005. We hope to build upon it from further public comment during a series of town hall meetings to be held during the summer of 2005. We also recognize that, once begun, the process may evolve over time as the DEQ, Dow, and the community learn more about the most effective ways of fostering community involvement.

**PROPOSED ON-GOING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

**Community Advisory Committee**

We propose the establishment of a “Community Advisory Committee” (CAC) to act as a focal point for community involvement. It is anticipated that the CAC will be based on, and expand upon, the DEQ Community Advisory Panel concept. The CAC would advise the DEQ and Dow on specific aspects of the process to resolve the dioxin issue, including the community involvement process.

The CAC will be designed to be broadly representative of the variety of interests in the community. The DEQ and Dow will specifically seek comment during the town hall meetings on how CAC members should be selected so that the process is fair and accepted by the community. The CAC is proposed to consist of 16 to 20 members who

will be asked to commit to a given number of meetings per year and serve for a period of two years. We envision that membership will change over time in a way that provides both continuity and fresh ideas and energy.

To maintain a neutral and balanced process, a professional facilitator will run the CAC meetings. Meetings will be open to the public, and each meeting will have a specific agenda that includes a segment for public comment. A professional recorder will produce a transcript of each CAC meeting, and the transcript will be available to the public.

Additional information on the proposed CAC will be contained in a separate information sheet.

### **Technical Information Meetings**

Periodically, the DEQ and Dow will hold a "Technical Information Meeting" (TIM) to present in-depth information to the community. These meetings will serve to relay technical or detailed information to the public and to receive feedback on that information. The TIMs will be held on a variety of topics as they develop and will be open to anyone who wants to attend. Locations will be chosen based on the topic. The format of a TIM will be designed to most effectively relay information and receive input on the selected topic. The first TIM is scheduled for July, when Dr. Linda Birnbaum from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will present information on the health effects of dioxin.

Again, a professional facilitator will run the TIMs. A professional recorder will produce a transcript of each TIM, and the transcript will be available to the public.

### **Periodic Town Hall Meetings**

The DEQ and Dow will also periodically hold town hall meetings to gather information from the community-at-large. A town hall meeting may be sponsored by the CAC to inform and gather information on their work or be sponsored by the DEQ and Dow at specific steps during the corrective action process. A professional facilitator will run the town hall meetings. A professional recorder will produce a transcript of each town hall meeting, and the transcript will be available to the public.

### **Community Dialogue on Major Milestones**

The DEQ and Dow know that there will be occasional events or products developed during the corrective action process that require a special dialogue with the community. We recognize that a proposed final agreement between the parties and a final Remedial Action Plan are two such products. Because the best form for such a dialogue is not clear at this time, this proposed ongoing community involvement plan does not describe

its specific characteristics. The DEQ and Dow will consult with the CAC and seek further public input on that issue.

### **Information Sheets**

The DEQ and Dow will periodically develop and distribute information sheets providing detailed discussions of topics of interest to the community. To the extent possible, these will be formatted to outline areas of agreement between the DEQ and Dow and the relative positions of each in areas where there is not agreement. This document, as well as documents describing the proposed CAC and the corrective action process, are examples of information sheets (under development) on specific topics.

### **Group Meetings**

The DEQ and Dow would like to participate in meetings of various professional, civic, educational, and similar organizations throughout the community. This participation will allow discussions with smaller audiences. Group meetings may be initiated through an invitation to the DEQ and/or Dow, or directly by the DEQ or Dow. To the extent our resources allow, the DEQ and Dow propose to participate jointly in these group meetings. The format of each group meeting, including the nature of the audience, will be the decision of the sponsoring group.

### **CONCLUSION**

The DEQ and Dow believe that the proposed ongoing community involvement process would provide an effective way of providing information to the community and gathering community input into our decisions. We look forward to receiving comment from the community on how we might improve our effort.