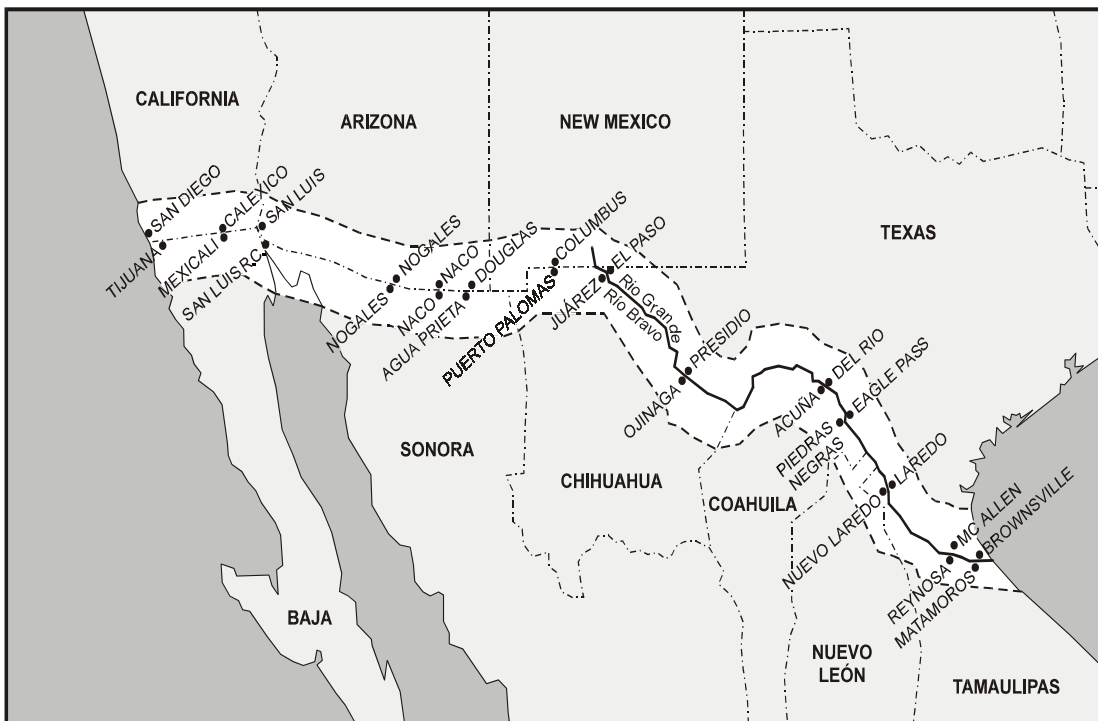


# SEMIANNUAL REPORT ON UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES



EPA 550-R-01-001  
August 2001  
Issue Number 7

## **INTRODUCTION**

U.S. EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO) provides leadership, advocacy, and assistance to:

- ▣➤ Prevent and prepare for hazardous material (HazMat) emergencies;
- ▣➤ Respond to environmental crises; and
- ▣➤ Inform the public about chemical hazards in their community.

To protect human health and the environment, CEPPO develops, implements, and coordinates regulatory and non-regulatory programs. The Office carries out this work in partnership with U.S. EPA Regional Offices, domestic and international organizations in the public and private sectors, and the general public.

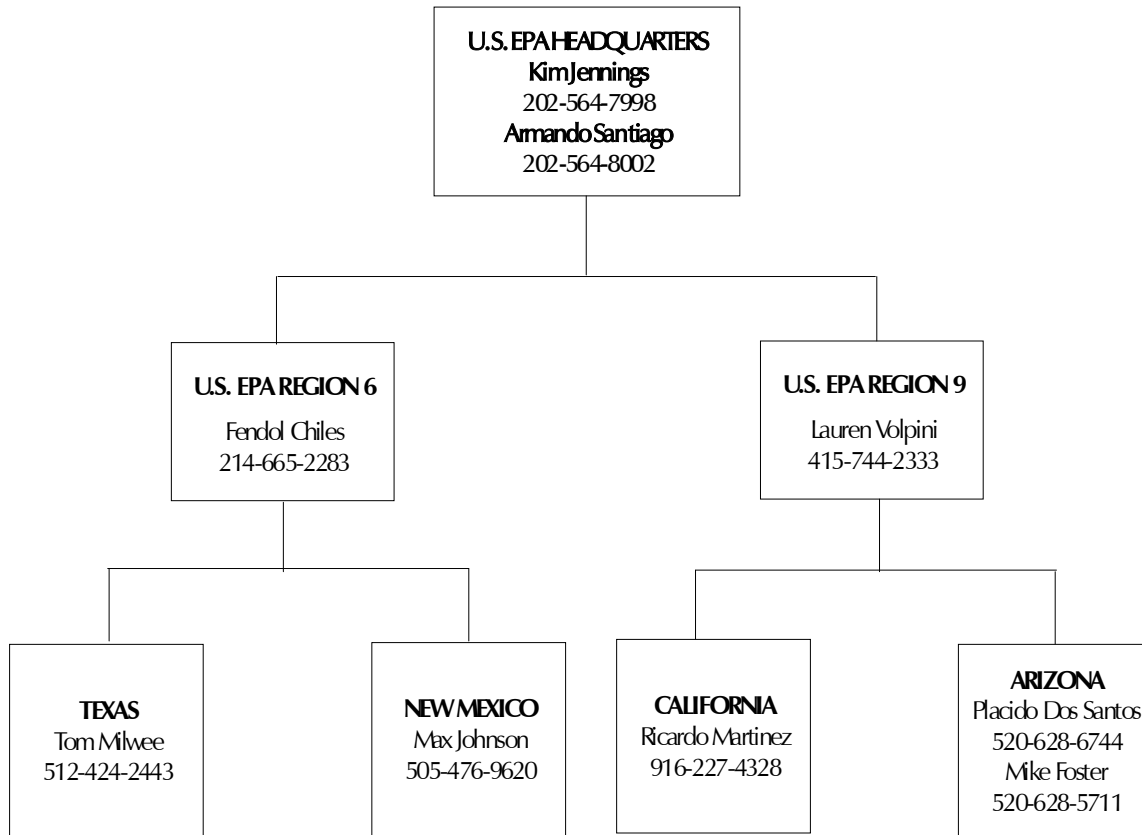
The purpose of the *Semiannual Report on United States-Mexico Border Contingency Planning Activities* is to consolidate information on United States-Mexico border joint response and contingency planning from U.S. EPA Regions, border states, and Sister Cities in order to promote the exchange of information and coordination among these groups. The types of U.S.-only and binational activities presented in this report include efforts such as developing Sister City plans, response exercises, training courses, and responses to actual hazardous material and environmental incidents. Essential documents, websites, and contact information also make this report useful reference material.

Each of the U.S. EPA Regions, U.S. states, and other organizations along the United States-Mexico border were contacted for information on recent and upcoming planning, preparedness, and response activities in the border area. The information gathered for the sixth issue of the report (October 2000) served as the baseline for this update. Updates are published twice a year.

## **PUBLISHED BY**

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## **DOCUMENTS OF INTEREST**

### **Sister City Plans**

- ▶ Bilingual Prevention and Emergency Response Plan between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora (March 2000) (*bilingual copies available from the U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765*)
- ▶ Bilingual Prevention and Emergency Response Plan between San Luis, Arizona and San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora (February 2000) (*bilingual copies available from U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765*)
- ▶ Brownsville-Matamoros Sister City Emergency Response Plan (May 1997) (*available from Fendol Chiles, U.S. EPA Region 6, Tel.# (214) 665-2283*)
- ▶ Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras Sister City Emergency Response Plan (March 1998) (*available from Fendol Chiles, U.S. EPA Region 6, Tel.# (214) 665-2283*)
- ▶ Laredo-Nuevo Laredo Sister City Emergency Response Plan (December 1998) (*available from Fendol Chiles, U.S. EPA Region 6, Tel.# (214) 665-2283*)
- ▶ McAllen-Reynosa Sister City Emergency Response Plan (February 2000) (*available from Fendol Chiles, U.S. EPA Region 6, Tel.# (214) 665-2283*)

### **General Information**

- ▶ "Border Visions," a 50-minute, bilingual education video about Border XXI (December 1999). (*For information about viewing or obtaining a copy, contact the U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765.*)
- ▶ Fact Sheets for the Border XXI Workgroups (*available from U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765.*)
- ▶ Joint United States-Mexico Inland Contingency Plan (signed June 4, 1999) (*available in English and Spanish, from Kim Jennings, U.S. EPA Headquarters, Tel.# (202) 564-7998 and on the web at <http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/pubs/border/ipmjcp-e.pdf>*)
- ▶ Semiannual Report on United States-Mexico Border Contingency Planning Activities (Issue Number 1, February 1998; Issue Number 2, August 1998; Issue Number 3, January 1999; Issue Number 4, September 1999; Issue Number 5, April 2000; Issue Number 6, October 2000) (*available from Kim Jennings, U.S. EPA Headquarters, Tel.# (202) 564-7998 and on the web at <http://www.epa.gov/swercepp/ip-bopr.htm#mexico>*)

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- ▄ United States-Mexico Border Environmental Indicators 1997 (June 1998) (available from Kim Jennings, U.S. EPA Headquarters, Tel.# (202) 564-7998 and on the web at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/indica97/index.htm>)

**Guidance Documents**

- ▄ Clean Air Act Risk Management Plan manual in Spanish (1998; translation of 157-page English manual) (available on CD-ROM from Fendol Chiles, U.S. EPA Region 6, Tel.# (214) 665-2283)
- ▄ Emergency Response Guidebook 2000 (available in English and Spanish from the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Government Printing Office (<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>) and through your state coordinator for emergency response organizations (<http://Hazmat.dot.gov/gydebook.htm>))
- ▄ Enhanced Exercise Design Course Manual (CA Specialized Training Institute under U.S. EPA contract) (available from U.S. EPA Region 9 Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office, Tel.# (415) 744-2405)
- ▄ Imperial and San Diego Counties Pesticide Episode Response Plans (September 1998) (available from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, Tel.# (760) 339-4314)
- ▄ Personal Safety Plan: Chemical Emergencies (1998) (available from Corpus Christi Nueces County LEPC, Tel.# (361) 880-3960)
- ▄ Response Procedures for 45 Chemicals (November 1998) (available from Corpus Christi Nueces County LEPC, Tel.# (361) 860-3960)
- ▄ U.S. Coast Guard ICS Basic Student Guide and Field Operations Guidelines/ICS Guia de Operaciones de Campo para Derrames Petroleros and ICS Basico Guia de Estudiante (available in Spanish at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/cper/ics.htm> under the "Training" link)

**Hazardous Materials Commodity Flow Studies**

- ▄ Hazardous Material Commodity Flow Study: Calexico, California Area (January 2001) (available from U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765 and at <http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/ip-bopr.htm>)
- ▄ Hazardous Material Commodity Flow Study: San Diego, California (June 2001) (available from U.S. EPA Region 9 Border Office, Tel.# (619) 235-4765 and at <http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/ip-bopr.htm>)

## **INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST**

- ▄▄▄▄ EPA CEPPPO — <http://www.epa.gov/swercepp/>
- ▄▄▄▄ EPA Region 6 Border Program — <http://www.epa.gov/r6border/index.htm>
- ▄▄▄▄ EPA Region 6 Border Program/U.S.- Mexico Border XXI Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup — <http://www.epa.gov/r6border/ef-erp.htm>
- ▄▄▄▄ EPA Region 9 Border XXI Program — <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/>
- ▄▄▄▄ U.S. National Response Center — <http://www.nrc.uscg.mil>
- ▄▄▄▄ Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Mexico Border Program — <http://www.adeq.state.az.us/enviro/regional/sro/border.html>
- ▄▄▄▄ Border EcoWeb by San Diego State University — <http://www.borderecoweb.sdsu.edu>
- ▄▄▄▄ Border Environment Cooperation Commission — <http://www.cocef.org>
- ▄▄▄▄ Border Information & Solutions Network — <http://www.bisn.org/>
- ▄▄▄▄ California EPA Border Environmental Program — <http://bep.calepa.ca.gov>
- ▄▄▄▄ City of Brownsville, Texas — <http://www.ci.brownsville.tx.us/>
- ▄▄▄▄ Corpus Christi Nueces County Local Emergency Planning Committee — <http://www.cclepc.org>
- ▄▄▄▄ Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission — <http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/>
- ▄▄▄▄ PROFEPA Environmental Emergencies in Mexico — <http://www.profepa.gob.mx>

## STATUS OF SISTER CITY PLANS

(Bold text indicates a final, signed plan.)

<b>Brownsville, Texas-Matamoros, Tamaulipas</b>	<b>Signed on May 6, 1997. Title: <i>Cross Border Contingency Plan — U.S./Mexico — Brownsville/Matamoros.</i></b>
<b>Eagle Pass, Texas-Piedras Negras, Coahuila</b>	<b>Signed on March 25, 1998. Title: <i>Cross Border Contingency Plan, U.S./Mexico Sister Cities, Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras.</i></b>
<b>Laredo, Texas-Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas</b>	<b>Signed on December 21, 1998. Title: <i>Cross Border Contingency Plan, U.S./Mexico Sister Cities, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo.</i></b>
<b>McAllen, Texas-Reynosa, Tamaulipas</b>	<b>Signed on February 19, 2000. Title: <i>Cross Border Contingency Plan, U.S./Mexico Sister Cities, McAllen/Reynosa.</i></b>
Del Rio, Texas-Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila	Seventeen representatives, including eight from Ciudad Acuña, attended a kick-off meeting held in Del Rio, TX on April 26, 2001. The plan should be completed in 2001.
El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua	This plan is in draft stage and should be finalized in 2001.
Presidio, Texas - Ojinaga, Chihuahua	Plan development discussions have occurred and the Plan will be considered by local officials in the near future.
Weslaco, Texas - Norte Progresso, Rio Bravo	Meetings held in July 2001 for preparation and completion of the Sister City Plan. The draft of the plan was reviewed in late July 2001.
Columbus, New Mexico-Puerto Las Palomas, Chihuahua	This plan is finalized and awaiting signatures from the appropriate parties.
Douglas, Arizona-Agua Prieta, Sonora	A binational letter of understanding to cooperate in case of emergencies became effective on April 29, 1999. The Sister City Plan is in the final stage of development. The Binational Steering Committee expects to complete the plan and hold a signing ceremony in Fall 2001.
Naco, Arizona-Naco, Sonora	Initial binational discussions regarding Sister City planning held on August 1, 2001.

STATUS OF SISTER CITY PLANS (cont'd)

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Nogales, Arizona- Nogales, Sonora	Signed on March 17, 2000. Title: <i>Binational Prevention and Emergency Response Plan between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora.</i>
San Luis, Arizona-San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora	Signed on February 25, 2000. Title: <i>Binational Prevention and Emergency Response Plan between San Luis, Arizona and San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora.</i>
Calexico, California- Mexicali, Baja California	A mutual aid agreement was signed in September 1993, entitled "City of Calexico-City of Mexicali Mutual Aid Agreement." An Agreement was developed between Imperial County, California and Ayuntamiento de Mexicali, Baja California in June 1999, entitled "Emergency Services Mutual Aid Agreement." Currently, there are no formal efforts underway to develop a Sister City Plan.
San Diego, California- Tijuana, Ensenada, Tecate, and Playas de Rosarito, Baja California	Communication plans exist for San Diego and Imperial Counties in the U.S. and Baja California in Mexico. Currently, there are no formal efforts underway to develop a Sister City Plan.

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## RECENT<sup>1</sup> UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

(Presented in Chronological Order (Presented by State in the Final Table))

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- September 18-22, 2000
- Brownsville, TX/Matamoros, Tamaulipas.** Conducted international exercises and presented workshops on hazardous materials during a five-day introductory hazardous materials training course. The course was conducted by a Federal On-Scene Coordinator and contractor personnel. Course topics included the Incident Command System (ICS) and the Unified Command System (UCS), site characterization and hazard identification, personal protective equipment, decontamination procedures, the implementation of the Joint Contingency Plan, and the role of Protección Civil and the National Response Center in the exercises. Workshop materials were available in Spanish and English and simultaneous interpretation was provided for up to 100 participants. Exercise and workshop participants included private medical response services, the Office of Center Operations and Community Services from the University of Texas, local emergency management teams, and the emergency brigades from LG Electronics and Johnson Controls.
- 
- October 23-27, 2000
- McAllen, TX/Reynosa, Tamaulipas.** Conducted international exercises and presented workshops during a five-day introductory hazardous materials training course. The course was taught in Spanish and English and covered numerous topics. See previous listing from September 18-22, 2000 for details.
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Hazardous material escapes from a tanker at the Brownsville-Matamoros exercise in September 2000. (Photo courtesy of A. Santiago.)

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<sup>1</sup>Or not previously reported in an earlier update.

## RECENT UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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- October 2000      **Nogales, AZ.** EPA Region 9 translated into Spanish and sponsored a week-long binational course on hazmat exercise design. The 40-hour course was delivered by the California Special Training Institute, through an EPA contract. During the course, participants designed and conducted the first tabletop exercise of their Sister City Plan.
- 
- November 2000      **Eagle Pass, TX.** EPA Region 6 conducted a five-day commodity flow study of hazardous materials vehicles (transporters and box trailers) crossing the border at the Camino Real port of entry. The purpose of the survey was to determine the number of trucks and volume of hazardous cargo transported into the U.S. at this location.
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- December 11-15, 2000      **San Luis, AZ.** EPA Region 9 translated into Spanish and sponsored a week-long binational course on hazmat exercise design. The 40-hour course was delivered by the California Special Training Institute, through an EPA contract. Participants were from Calexico/Mexicali, San Luis/San Luis Rio Colorado, Douglas/Agua Prieta and Yuma County. The course focused on designing an exercise to test San Luis' new Sister City Plan. In Fall/Winter 2001, the emergency response community will utilize their new exercise design skills to plan and conduct a full-scale, binational hazmat exercise.
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- January 2001      **Brownsville, TX/Matamoros, Tamaulipas; McAllen, TX/Reynosa, Tamaulipas; Laredo, TX/Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; Eagle Pass, TX/Piedras Negras, Coahuila; and El Paso, TX/Cuidad Juarez, Chihuahua.** Developed a database of local emergency response resources for the listed Sister Cities. The database was designed for use by local emergency planning commissions (LEPCs) in revising and updating their emergency response plans. The database is to be used with Lotus Organizer software.
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## RECENT UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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- January 2001      **San Diego, CA.** EPA Region 9 was part of a multi-agency, multimedia inspection team that visited ten Customs Brokerage houses. The inspections resulted in enforcement actions by participating county agencies, compliance outreach by EPA Region 9, and the decision to inspect approximately 90 additional brokerage houses in the community.
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- January 2001      **Calexico, CA.** EPA Region 9 issued a Final Report and Fact Sheet on the Calexico Commodity Flow Study, which describes the hazardous materials traveling through the area and discusses options for risk reduction. The Calexico City Council held a special session to discuss the report. Session participants included impacted residents, County Supervisors, the media, and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) officials.
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- February 2001      **Brownsville, TX.** Conducted two five-day commodity flow studies of hazardous materials vehicles (transporters and box trailers) crossing the border at the Veteran's and Los Indios ports of entry. The purpose of the studies was to determine the number of trucks and volume of hazardous cargo transported into the U.S. at these locations.
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- March 2001      **Texas.** Conducted CAMEO workshops in Spanish at the Laredo Public Library, the El Paso Fire Training Center, the Hidalgo Fire Department Training Center, the Brownsville Fire Training Center, and the Ramada Inn in Del Rio, TX. The Mexican agencies participating in these courses included Protección Civil, Bomberos, PROFEPA, and SEMARNAP. Each course had approximately 15 participants.
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- March 2001      **Nogales & Rio Rico, AZ.** EPA Region 9 conducted a compliance inspection of an International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC) Wastewater Treatment Plant, along with the Arizona State Emergency Response Commission, the Santa Cruz Local Emergency Planning Committee, and the Nogales and Rio Rico Fire Departments. The inspection revealed an EPCRA violation and raised concerns about the adequacy of the plant's Risk Management Program.
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## RECENT UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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- ➡ March 2001      **San Diego, CA.** The California Border Emergency Planning and Response Task Force met to discuss the results of the San Diego Commodity Flow Study, the U.S. DOT's Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and hazardous material incidents at the border.
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- ➡ April 23-25, 2001      **Laredo, TX/Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.** Conducted international exercises and presented workshops in Spanish and English over five days. The workshops covered a variety of topics. See the September 18-22, 2000 listing for details.
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- ➡ May 2001      **Nogales & San Luis, AZ.** The first two 200-hour Binational Hazardous Materials Technician Courses were conducted with assistance from EPA Region 9, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and the Arizona Division of Emergency Management. As a result of this training, 50 new HazMat Technicians are now certified to respond to hazardous material releases in the Arizona/Sonora border area. Four of the course graduates are emergency responders from Sonora, Mexico.
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- ➡ May 2001      **Nogales, Sonora.** A binational, full field exercise to test and activate the Nogales-Nogales Sister City Plan was conducted. EPA Region 9 helped design the event and also participated. Other participants included local, state and Federal government entities from both sides of the border, railroad officials, and representatives from nearby industrial facilities.
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- ➡ June 2001      **San Diego, CA.** EPA Region 9 issued a Final Report and Fact Sheet on the San Diego Commodity Flow Study. The study describes the hazardous materials traveling through the San Diego border area and provides recommendations for risk reduction.
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## RECENT UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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- Spring 2001      **New Mexico.** EPA Region 6 contractor staff conducted a roundtable discussion on planning a future city/port at the Santa Teresa crossing in New Mexico. Discussion topics included Sister City plans, commodity flow studies, hazmat training, and implementation of international exercises. The port will be used to alleviate traffic congestion in Juarez, Mexico.
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- July 2001      **Tucson, AZ.** EPA Region 9 held a Regional Response Team (RRT) meeting, part of which focused on the EPA border program. Federal and state RRT members discussed individual and RRT-wide activities that could help improve chemical safety in the border area.
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- July 2001      **Tucson, AZ.** EPA Region 9 and the Arizona Department of Emergency Management held a one-day workshop for members of Arizona's four border area local emergency planning committees (LEPCs). Speakers included staff from the U.S. DOT's Motor Carrier Safety Administration, University of Arizona, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Santa Cruz County, and fire chiefs from two Sister Cities. Workshop topics included transborder transportation issues, border success stories, the unique challenges of border LEPCs, and the relationship of the LEPCs with their Sister Cities.
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Participants demonstrate emergency response techniques at the Brownsville-Matamoros exercise in September 2000. (Photo courtesy of Armando Santiago.)

## UPCOMING UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

(All Activities are Tentative - Presented by State in the Final Table)

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▣▶ July 31-August 2, 2001	<b>Eagle Pass, TX.</b> EPA Region 6 will conduct a workshop with city officials to discuss the international exercise in Eagle Pass (see below) and the Del Rio-Ciudad Acuña Sister City Plan.
▣▶ August 28-31, 2001	<b>Eagle Pass, TX &amp; Piedras Negras, Coahuila.</b> Will conduct international exercises and present workshops on hazardous materials during a five-day introductory hazardous materials training course. The course will be conducted by a Federal On-Scene Coordinator and contractor personnel. Course topics include the Incident Command System (ICS) and the Unified Command System (UCS), site characterization and hazard identification, personal protective equipment, decontamination procedures, the implementation of the Joint Contingency Plan, and the role of Protección Civil and the National Response Center in the responses. Workshop materials will be available in Spanish and English and simultaneous interpretation will be provided for up to 100 participants. Exercise and workshop participants include private medical response services, the Office of Center Operations and Community Services from the University of Texas, local emergency management teams, and the emergency brigades from LG Electronics and Johnson Controls.
▣▶ August & September 2001	<b>Texas.</b> Three Joint Response Team (JRT) workshops are scheduled for the Sister Cities of Brownsville-Matamoros, Tamaulipas; Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, and El Paso-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. Officials from several Federal, State, and local agencies are expected to participate. Workshop topics include how the National Contingency Plan, the Joint Contingency Plan, and the Local Emergency Planning Committees affect communities along the border and interactions between the Sister Cities.
▣▶ August-November 2001	<b>California &amp; Arizona.</b> EPA Region 9 will conduct a hazardous material emergency response resource capability assessment of the six Sister Cities in the region. The assessment tool and protocol are currently under development.

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## UPCOMING UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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➤ September 2001	<b>Arizona &amp; California.</b> EPA Region 9 invited three bilingual emergency responders from Nogales, Sonora and 17 responders from six Sister Cities to attend the Annual Continuing Challenge Workshop. The Workshop is scheduled to be held in Sacramento, CA on September 4-7, 2001. EPA is paying registration, travel, and per diem costs for participants.
➤ November 2001	<b>Arizona.</b> Arizona-Sonora border area contingency planning and emergency response meeting to be held in Hermosillo, Mexico. The agenda will focus on emergency response preparedness status.
➤ TBD 2001	<b>Texas.</b> EPA Region 6 will conduct workshops in Spanish focusing on the Field Operations Guidebook. This manual was translated into Spanish and the Spanish version is now available on the EPA website. (See the Documents of Interest section of this report for further details.)
➤ TBD 2001	<b>California &amp; Arizona.</b> The first phase of a tire pile study conducted by EPA Region 9 and CEPPPO in Washington, DC will be completed. In the first phase of the study, aerial photographs will be used to identify waste tire piles on both sides of the Region 9 border. Next, a ranking tool, audit checklist, and inspection protocol will be developed and used to determine which sites should be field audited.
➤ TBD 2001	<b>San Luis, AZ/San Luis Rio Colorado.</b> The Sister Cities will hold a binational, full field exercise to activate and test their Sister City Plan, with support and participation from EPA Region 9. All levels of government and industry from both sides of the border will be involved in the event.
➤ TBD 2002	<b>San Diego, CA.</b> The City and County of San Diego will purchase and equip a vehicle to be stationed in the border area that will be used for incident response and to inspect facilities for violations of hazardous material and waste regulations. The purchase will be made using a \$50,000 grant from EPA Region 9.
➤ TBD 2002	<b>Tucson, AZ.</b> EPA Region 9 will organize a workshop for federal facilities in the border area to focus on improving their risk management planning and provide support for local border emergency response preparedness.

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**UPCOMING UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER  
CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)**

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- ▣ TBD 2002      **California & Arizona.** The Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Team will coordinate a multimedia effort to inspect and provide compliance outreach at all IBWC facilities in EPA Region 9.
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## **Feature Activity: United Response 2000 Exercise Reynosa, Tamaulipas, November 1, 2000**

(Based on a summary by Mario Davila, McAllen, Texas Hazardous Materials Fire Chief)

On November, 1, 2000, the McAllen Fire Department, along with Protección Civil and Heroico Cuerpo de Bomberos of Reynosa held a binational emergency response exercise, called United Response 2000, to test their Sister City emergency response plan. The exercise took place during a five-state conference and involved Local Emergency Planning Committee members from Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

The emergency exercise consisted of three simulated events – a head-on collision between two tankers, a single minibus collision with multiple injuries, and a chemical leak threatening the lives of thousands of nearby residents and plant workers, including U.S. citizens. During the exercise, nearly 10,000 persons were evacuated from their residences and worksites. This was the largest mass-scale evacuation practice in Mexico outside of Mexico City, and the largest recorded land crossing of U.S. firefighters. The exercise was staged in front of the headquarters for TRW-Electronica at Parque Industrial Reynosa, immediately east of Lucio Blanco International Airport in Reynosa and south of the Pharr-Reynosa international port of entry. Training for the event, which was sponsored by the U.S. EPA, was held at La Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas-Reynosa Aztlán.

***Exercise Planning and Participation.*** Planning and preparation for this exercise required the coordination and cooperation of multiple agencies from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Participants included MEDCARE EMS, Valley Air Care, and Chemical Response and Remediation Contractors, Inc., each of which provided personnel and equipment. In addition, the Office of Center Operations and Community Services (CoServe) from the University of Texas-Pan American deployed their NetMobile to evaluate communication capabilities with their mobile wireless network and satellite equipment. Other agencies and organizations involved in the exercise included the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management, the McAllen Police 911 Center, the emergency brigades from LG Electronics and Johnson Controls, and various U.S. and Mexican federal and local government agencies. Additionally, fire departments and other local response entities from the McAllen metropolitan area formed a group called the United Response Strike Force and participated in the exercise.

***Exercise Goals and Objectives.*** United Response 2000 had a number of goals. It allowed the Sister Cities of McAllen and Reynosa to test their Cross Border Contingency Plan. It also raised issues related to medical access in the border region, which are addressed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Safe and Healthy Sister Cities Program. United Response 2000 also demonstrated how a response governed by an incident management system called United Command would operate. The primary focus of United Command is to combine and coordinate the efforts of local response and support agencies

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in safeguarding human life, property, the environment, and the area's economic infrastructure. Finally, the exercise helped assess communication vulnerabilities between geographically diffuse and governmentally diverse sites in Mexico City, Ciudad Victoria, and Reynosa in Mexico and Washington, DC; Dallas; and McAllen in the United States.

**Lessons Learned.** Participants and planners alike learned many lessons as a result of this binational exercise. The exercise confirmed the need for additional and ongoing cross-border coordination, training, and local resource management, with a special emphasis on environmental protection and transboundary issues. The exercise also demonstrated that improved communication is needed, especially in the areas of cross-border cell phone coverage, provision of a common radio band for emergency responders, and distribution of communication equipment among responders. During the exercise, the city of McAllen distributed handheld radios, but this is not a standard practice.

In addition to the lessons learned noted above, the exercise had practical benefits at several levels. Overall, it provided the opportunity to evaluate emergency preparedness and response readiness for health, safety, and environmental threats resulting from the release of hazardous materials. At the local level, the exercise prompted TRW managers to initiate discussions with local colleges and universities regarding environmental safety programs. The exercise also resulted in closer cooperation between local fire departments. At the state level, public servants from Texas who participated in the exercise, such as members of local police and fire departments, were able to receive state credit toward their mandatory extracurricular activity training. United Response 2000 was recognized and approved for state credit by the Texas Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management. The exercise also stimulated interest in Reynosa regarding the incorporation of maquila brigades as an environmental protection resource. At the federal level, United Response 2000 provided a forum for communication between the U.S. EPA's Federal On-Scene Coordinator in Dallas and the State Director of Protección Civil in Mexico. Internationally, it served the purposes of two international organizations—the United Nations and the World Health Organization by demonstrating the United Nations' Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) process. The APELL process was developed by the United Nations to demonstrate how to effectively handle technological accidents and emergencies.

Finally, United Response 2000 provided a unique and high-profile example of emergency response for local communities, environmental groups, and classes dealing with environmental management and response issues. The ability of environmental issues to generate high levels of cooperation between local, regional, state, and federal officials is unique and invaluable. The United Response 2000 exercise is an example of a best practice that future generations – and the rest of the world – can follow.

### Feature Activity: Ambos Nogales Exercise - May 6, 2001

In March 2000, officials from Nogales, AZ and Nogales, Sonora (collectively known as Ambos Nogales) signed the Binational Prevention and Emergency Response Plan (i.e., the Sister City Plan), which established the Binational Emergency Planning Committee (BEPC). At 5:00 a.m. on May 6, 2001, the BEPC and its Exercise Design Team conducted a full-scale, real time, multi-agency exercise in Nogales, Sonora.

The purpose of the exercise was to create a scenario requiring implementation of the Sister City Plan and to provide a training platform for exercise participants. Multiple Mexican agencies and members of the private sector were represented at the exercise, including 14 federal agencies, four state agencies, and seven private facilities. Numerous representatives from the U.S. also participated, including officials from the City, County, Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), USEPA Region 9, Arizona Department of Emergency Management (ADEM), and Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

The exercise simulated a collision of a westbound passenger bus with a northbound train carrying tanker cars of sulfuric acid. The incident occurred at the intersection of Boulevard 2000 and the railroad tracks in Nogales, Sonora. The impact from the collision caused a tanker car to derail, resulting in a release of sulfuric acid. Twelve passengers were injured in the crash and were severely burned by the escaping sulfuric acid.



The Ambos Nogales exercise involved a school bus filled with children that lost control and hit sulfuric acid tankers being transported by rail. (Photo courtesy of L. Chaboya.)

After the collision, the nearby Summex Maquila Factory notified the Municipal Police about the incident. The Police, in turn, notified the railroad transit police, la Cruz Roja (the Red Cross), the Los Bomberos (the fire department), and Protección Civil. The transit police were the first to arrive on scene, followed by the Red Cross who set up a triage station. Protección Civil contacted the Nogales, AZ Fire Department, which activated the Binational Plan. The Nogales, AZ Fire Department responded by bringing in a hazmat

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trailer and 18 HazMat Technicians-in-Training. In addition to the 18 trainees from Arizona, four trainees from Nogales, Sonora also participated in the event, which served as the final component in their 200-hour HazMat Technician certification course work. The HazMat Technician certification course was funded by USEPA Region 9 via a grant to ADEQ, with additional support from ADEM.



Hazmat Technicians from the Nogales, AZ fire department respond to the simulated sulfuric acid leak from a railcar in the Ambos Nogales exercise. (Photo courtesy of L. Chaboya.)

In preparation for this exercise, USEPA Region 9 provided a 40-hour binational Enhanced Exercise Design course to assist participants in the exercise design phase. The objective of the Enhanced Exercise Design course was to develop an Exercise Design Team capable of delivering emergency management exercises for Ambos Nogales. During the Ambos Nogales exercise, course instructors were on hand to evaluate the students' skills in meeting the training objectives.

After the exercise, a formal debrief (Hotwash) was conducted. During the debrief, seven independent evaluators determined that (1) the exercise scenario was highly realistic; (2) the level of cooperation between the agencies and both countries was exemplary; and (3) the binational plan worked well. After the exercise, it was also determined that:

- Emergency agencies from both sides of the border have a critical need for additional equipment and training;
- An international communications system, a resource directory, and a binational recovery fund need to be created;
- Emergency responders need the ability to plug/patch leaks; and, most importantly
- A paramedic toxic response team needs to be formed.

The Hotwash also identified several key steps that need to be taken prior to holding future exercises. These include:

- Developing a safety and security component;
- Holding a pre-exercise briefing to explain the "ground rules" to all involved

- individuals (i.e., the controllers, evaluators, and observers); and
- Discussing and agreeing with all parties involved whether video taping should be allowed.

In addition to teaching many valuable lessons, planning and implementing this binational exercise strengthened the bond between the Ambos Nogales emergency responders. As a result, three Nogales, AZ firefighters donated their time to deliver an 80-hour HazMat course to 12 volunteer firefighters from Nogales, Sonora. A graduation ceremony was held on July 7, 2001 in Nogales to recognize the achievements of course participants.

## **RECENT AND PLANNED UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Presented by State (Presented in Chronological Order in Previous Tables)

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### **Texas**



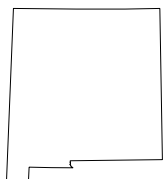
#### **Recent Activities:**

- Five Spanish CAMEO workshops. (Laredo, El Paso, Hidalgo, Brownsville, and Del Rio, March 2000)
- International exercises and workshops on hazardous materials. (Brownsville, September 18-22, 2000)
- International exercises and workshops on hazardous materials. (McAllen, October 23-27, 2000)
- Commodity flow study of hazardous materials vehicles at the Camino Real port of entry. (Eagle Pass, November 2000)
- Database of local emergency response resources for Sister Cities. (Brownsville-Matamoros, McAllen-Reynosa, Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras, El Paso-Ciudad Juarez, January 2001)
- Commodity flow study of hazardous materials vehicles at the Veteran's and Los Indios ports of entry. (Brownsville, February 2001)
- International exercises and workshops on hazardous materials. (Laredo, April 23-25, 2001)

#### **Planned Activities:**

- Workshop with city officials to discuss the international exercises in Eagle Pass and Del Rio. (July 31-August 2, 2001)
  - International exercises and workshops on hazardous materials. (Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras, August 28-31, 2001)
  - Three Joint Response Team workshops with participation from Federal, State, and local agencies. (August & September, 2001)
  - Spanish workshops on the Field Operations Guidebook. (TBD, 2001)
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### **New Mexico**



#### **Recent Activities:**

- EPA workshop on creation of new city/port at border. (Spring 2001)

#### **Planned Activities:**

- None reported.
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**RECENT AND PLANNED UNITED STATES-MEXICO  
BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)**

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**California**



**Recent Activities:**

- Ten Customs Brokerage houses visited by multi-agency, multimedia inspection team. (San Diego, January 2001)
- Final Report and Fact Sheet issued by EPA Region 9 on the Calexico Commodity Flow Study. (Calexico, January 2001)
- California Border Emergency Planning and Response Task Force meeting. (San Diego, March 2001)
- Final Report and Fact Sheet issued by EPA Region 9 on the San Diego Commodity Flow Study. (San Diego, June 2001)

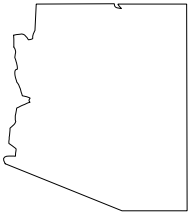
**Planned Activities:**

- Hazardous material emergency response resource capability assessment of six Sister Cities. (August-November 2001)
  - Emergency responders from San Diego, Calexico, and Imperial County invited to attend the Annual Continuing Challenge Workshop in Sacramento in September 2001. (September 2001)
  - Completion of first phase of tire pile study. (TBD 2001)
  - EPA Region 9 Grant to purchase a vehicle for chemical incident response and facility inspections for San Diego County EHS. (San Diego, TBD 2002)
  - Multimedia inspection and compliance outreach effort at IBWC facilities. (TBD 2002)
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## RECENT AND PLANNED UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER CONTINGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES (cont'd)

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### Arizona



#### Recent Activities:

- Two binational, EPA sponsored forty-hour "Exercise Design" courses conducted by the California Specialized Training Institute. (Nogales, October 2000 & San Luis, December 2000)
- Compliance inspection performed at an IBWC Wastewater Treatment Plant. (Nogales and Rio Rico, March 2001)
- Two EPA-sponsored, binational 200-hour Hazardous Materials Technician Courses conducted. (Nogales & San Luis, May 2001)
- Regional Response Team meeting held with half-day focus on EPA Border Program. (Tucson, July 2001)
- One-day workshop held for members of all four border area LEPCs. (Tucson, July 2001)

#### Planned Activities:

- Hazardous material emergency response resource capability assessment of six Sister Cities. (August-November 2001)
  - Emergency responders from Sonora, Mexico and Nogales, Naco, Douglas, and San Luis, AZ invited to attend the Annual Continuing Challenge Workshop in Sacramento in September 2001. (September 2001)
  - Arizona-Sonora border area contingency planning and emergency response meeting. (Hermosillo, MX, November 2001)
  - Completion of first phase of tire pile study. (TBD 2001)
  - Full field exercise to test the San Luis-San Luis Sister City Plan. (TBD 2001)
  - Federal facilities workshop on risk management planning, and local emergency response preparedness to be held. (Tucson, TBD 2002)
  - Multimedia inspection and compliance outreach effort at IBWC facilities. (TBD 2002)
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