1.   Introduction

Any dialogue and communication in a community outreach project should be open and honest, especially in the assessment and resolution of any issues. This principle should apply no matter how unsatisfactory the situation might appear to be, so that credibility is maintained, respect is earned and trust is forthcoming.

Any population working in or living close to a lead plant is susceptible to lead exposure as is the environment. It is clear therefore that the objectives of any outreach project must include a community care program and regular environmental and biological monitoring. So that the implications of any adverse results are understood and the appropriate action taken it is also essential that education features strongly in the outreach agenda.

2.   Identify Common Concerns

As a first step towards a community engagement it is important to identify common concerns and interests to facilitate and build working relationships. The most likely issues of common interest will be:

-       Population health and safety, in and outside the workplace, including child hood lead exposure.

-       Environmental protection, in particular waste management including effluent treatment and the disposal or containment of solid residues.

-       Measures that promote a viable business and sustainable employment.

-       Access by the community to the business, including senior management, and by the business to the community, including public bodies and local NGO's.

-       Mechanisms for an effective open and honest dialogue between the business and the community.

3.   Assign Responsibilities and Become Involved

Responsibilities for coordinating reporting in those areas of common interest should be shared equally between the community and company representatives, bearing in mind that it is essential for everyone to work in partnership and help each other. To provide feedback to the Company's senior management and those members of the community not actively involved in an outreach program it is important for all decisions and discussions to be properly publicized and distributed to all interested parties.

This can be achieved through the use of newsletters, briefing groups, information leaflets at medical surgeries and information sheets for schoolteachers. Use of the Internet, if access is available is also becoming increasingly effective, but there is a need to establish regular "face to face" meetings to build personal relationships and trust.

The type and nature of "face to face" forums will vary depending on the location of the plant, the proximity of the local community, and many other factors. Accordingly it is important not to proscribe "meeting mechanisms", but to initially invite representatives of the local community to determine what would be appropriate and how often such a body should meet.

In addition the Company should be actively involved in community affairs. Company employees with children at local schools should be encouraged to stand as Governors. The Company should seek to support charitable events, not financially, but by serving on organizing committees and actively providing manpower at outdoor and indoor events.

Finally the Company should make every effort to hold annual or bi-annual "open days", and certainly on those occasions when a new item of plant or a new process is commissioned. For such events the Company should provide escorted guided tours with full commentary and a Company representative able to answer any questions about the process, thereby enabling the local community to not only see everything, but to satisfy themselves that the Company has nothing to hide.

4.   Provide Information and Feedback

To do this:

-      Establish records and make briefing notes of all meetings, decisions and any forthcoming actions that will either impact on the Company or the community.

-      Publish data, information and meeting minutes in the public domain.

-      Ensure that there is independent auditing of environmental and occupational exposures, both in the community and the company through prestigious organizations such as local Universities or other expert bodies.

In order to make a valued and lasting contribution to any community engagement project those involved must:

-      Know and understand the key issues, the technology, the health effects of lead exposure, the communities' social needs and priorities, government agendas and the economic factors affecting the recycling business.

-      Don't ignore problems, no matter how insoluble they seem to be, instead get the background information, anticipate the likely difficulties and solicit the help of other experts and local interested parties to resolve the issues.

-      Share your concerns and expertise freely to improve understanding.

-      Apply rules at meetings so that listening is paramount and that everybody involved is sensitive to the needs of the community and the lead plant.

-      At an early stage in the project involve local community groups actively seeking their views and participation.

5.   Key Success Factors

Key success factors that have been identified from case studies are:

*   Stakeholders are committed to and identify with the projects' agreed goals.
*   Forums for effective dialogue are established.
*   Communications are honest, open, frank and frequent.
*   Objectives are realistic and agreed by all the stakeholders with action focused firmly on achieving and maintaining the aims of the program.
*   Responsibilities for each aspect of the program are clearly defined and own ership discussed and agreed.
*   Population health and local environmental goals are based on sound man agement, constructive dialogue and agreed action so that any achievements made can be sustained.

June 2002