

PROJECT FACT SHEET

Project Name:	Border wide Study to Evaluate 6 Sister City Joint Contingency Plans (SCJCP) in CA/BC and SON/AZ	Completion date:	August 11, 2023
Project Location:	Region IX, Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California	Project ID:	1254
Goal 4:	Enhance Joint Preparedness for Environmental Response	Technical Rep:	Al Brown
Contact Person	Al Brown, Arizona State University; al.brown@asu.edu ; 480-678-9488	EPA:	Bill Jones and Lorena López-Powers
		NADB:	Jorge Hernandez

Pre-Project Conditions

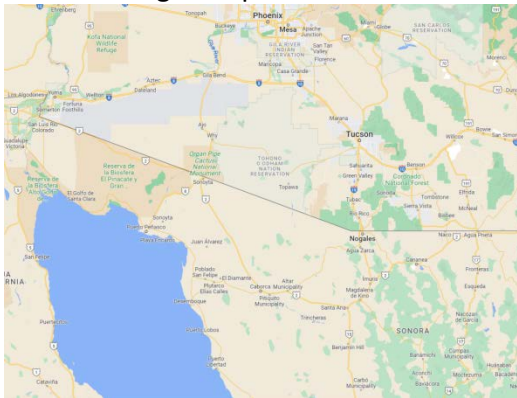
A 2020 report by the North American Development Bank (NADB) states there are more 9 million people living in the 15 sister cities within the U.S.-Mexico region. Over 1.6 million employees work in more than 5,190 manufacturing facilities known as maquiladoras, according to the NADB report titled 25 Years of Green Investments in Communities in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region. Hazardous substances such as toxic metals, flammable materials and reactive materials are routinely transported to and used at these facilities. In addition to the maquiladoras, there are several mines and agricultural product warehouses located within 100 km of the border. The mines use large quantities of sulfuric acid. The produce warehouses use large quantities of anhydrous ammonia. Chemical hazardous substances are transported by truck and rail through the Sister Cities each day. The use and transport of hazardous substances and generation of hazardous wastes affects border area air quality, surface water and groundwater. Annex II of the 1983 La Paz Agreement created a binational commitment to develop a binational Joint Contingency Plan for responses to polluting incidents. The subsequent binational Joint Contingency Plan applicable to non-marine areas is commonly referred to as the Inland Border Plan. This plan directs each of the 15 Sister City pairs to develop local Sister City Joint Contingency Plans (SCJCPs) for the planning of responses to contingencies or releases of chemical hazardous substances that threaten

Region IX U.S.-Mexico Border Area Source: Google Maps



California/Baja California Border Area Source: Google Maps



<p>communities on both sides of the border. The SCJCPs are intended to mitigate the environmental and public health effects from polluting incidents because they increase the potential for more emergency resources to be rapidly deployed at the site of the incident. A review of the U.S. EPA webpages for Border 2025 before the start of the project indicated most of the signed SCJCPs in the Region IX area have not been updated or revised for more than 5 years.</p>	<p>Arizona/Sonora Border Area</p> <p>Source: Google Maps</p> 	
<p>Project Objective</p>		
<p>Develop a report on the status and quality of six Region IX SCJCPs for use by Border 2025 Goal 4 leaders and stakeholders as they implement the five-year plan for Border 2025. The report is referred to as the Synthesis Report.</p> <p>Conduct two notification drills at two different sister city locations. The drills will test participant’s ability to make timely contact with cross border counterparts identified by the existing SCJCP.</p>		
<p>Project Scope</p>	<p>Project Cost</p>	
<p>The project was limited to six sister city pairs along the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California borders. The sister cities are: Naco, Arizona/Naco, Sonora; Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora; Nogales, Arizona/Nogales, Sonora; San Luis, Arizona/San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora; Calexico, California/Mexicali, Baja California; San Diego, California/Tijuana, Baja California.</p>	<p>B2025 awarded amount:</p>	<p>\$ 63,224.00</p>
	<p>Total project cost:</p>	<p>\$59,725 estimated</p>
	<p>Project Length:</p>	<p>February 2022-August 2023 (18 mons)</p>
	<p>Benefited population:</p>	<p>7,597,100 est.</p>

The Results	
Outcomes	Outputs
<p>The Synthesis Report may be used by all Sister Cities to improve their SCJCPs resulting in reduced health and environmental damage caused by emergencies stemming from all hazards.</p> <p>Improved communication and coordination by responders activating the Cochise County/Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora SCJCP was observed and documented.</p> <p>Use of the Synthesis Report to revise SCJCPs may improve decision-making by all appropriate response personnel during emergencies.</p> <p>Use of the Synthesis report to revise SCJCPs may improve quality and timeliness of recovery after chemical hazardous substances emergencies.</p> <p>The Synthesis Report establishes necessary information for initiating SCJCP updates by 2025.</p>	<p>Conducted five virtual SCJCP evaluation criteria development meetings with stakeholders.</p> <p>Prepared a SCJCP evaluation guide for use by all 5 universities.</p> <p>Conducted one notification drill planning meeting with emergency managers in the Cochise County/Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora sister city area.</p> <p>Conducted three virtual stakeholder meetings to review the SCJCP evaluations.</p> <p>Prepared an integrated SCJCP Evaluation Report (Synthesis Report).</p> <p>Conducted one training class on SCJCP notification requirements for the Cochise County/Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora area.</p> <p>Conducted one SCJCP notification drill in the Cochise County/Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora area.</p> <p>Produced one After Action Report/Improvement Plan for the notification drill.</p> <p>Submitted five quarterly reports, a Project Fact Sheet and a Final Report</p>
Significant project contributions	
<p>The Synthesis Report of Six SCJCPs in EPA Region IX is an excellent benchmarking resource for all 15 sister city pairs along the U.S.-Mexico border to use as they go through the process of revising their current plans. The Synthesis Report identifies the best practices for binational chemical hazardous substances emergency response that have been written into each of the six evaluated SCJCPs. The Synthesis Report also identified potential new best binational chemical hazardous substances emergency response practices that should be considered during future revisions of all SCJCPs.</p> <p>The final report summarizing six SCJCPs evaluations found that the plans were adequate. Each plan included excellent examples of good binational chemical hazardous substances emergency response planning. However, the evaluation team found areas in each plan that should be improved to ensure the full and effective utilization of resources essential to protect the public health, safety, and environment within the border region.</p> <p>The most significant issue that should be addressed is that too many years have passed since the revision of each SCJCP. Changes in personnel, policies and infrastructure have occurred that responders need to know to adequately respond to chemical hazardous substances incidents.</p>	

Four of the SCJCPs have not been updated or revised in over five years. One has not been revised in 9 years. Another has not been revised in 17 years.

Some of the current plans were very difficult to obtain in both English and Spanish. The SCJCPs are a part of the public record. All SCJCPs should be readily available to the public.

One of the most significant issues identified in the evaluations is the absence of information related to difficulties in obtaining insurance coverage that many jurisdictions are experiencing. Some stakeholders reported that they do not provide cross border response aid because of liability concerns in the absence of insurance coverage. This significantly jeopardizes emergency response operations and the facilitation of resources and manpower moving across the border.

None of the six evaluated plans discusses peculiar local natural conditions that could cause releases of chemicals (i.e., floods, earthquakes, wildfires, landslides, etc.).

None of the plans indicate a commitment to share site-specific chemical information between response agencies on a “need to know” basis during a mutual response.

Other issues that could impact chemical hazardous substances emergency response efforts were identified. These issues include legal and administrative impediments to movement of response personnel and equipment across the border; missing identification of necessary training courses; missing identification of necessary exercises; interoperability flaws in the binational communication systems; absence of information regarding the annual area wide chemical usage; and absence of information on how emergency response agencies will maintain continuity of operations (especially when a hazard has the impact to reduce the size of the agencies responding to threats).

A list of recommendations for use during plan revisions is given in the Final Project Report.

The results of the communications drill and AAR/IP show the value of periodically conducting binational drills. The opportunity to have direct communication between the responsible emergency management agency leaders revealed a serious impediment to movement of emergency response equipment into Mexico from the United States during an emergency incident. Having knowledge in advance of the equipment movement restriction during an incident gives the respective response agencies an opportunity to resolve the conflict before a binational incident occurs.

We recommend that the appropriate Border 2025 representatives from each country investigate the equipment movement prohibition to reach a cooperative agreement or understanding that is in the best interest of protecting the health and welfare of all communities.