

# Lecture Hall

## Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)  
72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

### Solid Waste

Monday, June 23

1:00 – 1:50pm

#### **Out of the Box and Into the Fire—Taming the Wild, Wild West**

*Gerri A. Silva, Director, El Dorado County Environmental Management, CA*

The Angora Fire in South Lake Tahoe, California erupted June 24, 2007. An emergency request was made to Environmental Management to report to the Emergency Operation Center. Initial reports indicate that 150 homes were destroyed; this number climbs to 254. On June 29, 2007, a letter was delivered to Governor Schwarzenegger detailing the debris removal recovery efforts that would be coordinated by a Multi Agency Coordinating (MAC) team. The MAC team was formed with the goal of developing and implementing a plan to remove structural debris from burned areas that were destroyed by the Angora Fire. The MAC team consisted of Cal/EPA Integrated Waste Management Board, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Department of Toxic Substance Control and El Dorado County Environmental Management.

The MAC team identified that a state-managed debris cleanup in collaboration with the county was the most desirable and efficient manner to proceed in the recovery phase. The immediate removal of the solid waste debris was crucial to abate any serious health and safety hazards, including unstable chimneys, walls of fire damaged structures, and harmful chemicals. In addition, the prompt and controlled removal of the structural debris would significantly reduce the potential for degradation of Lake Tahoe due to runoff from thunderstorms. Removal would also protect the basin's air quality, and would enable impacted residents to move forward with rebuilding.

A community meeting was held that declared that a debris recovery program had been developed that would offer the best plan to protect public health and safety and the environment. On August 24, 2007, the last lot was cleared of structural debris and the hazardous tree removal program was implemented. All hazardous trees were felled and removed within 40 days. On October 23, 2007, only 120 days after the start of the Angora Fire, the debris recovery phase was completed and rebuilding was occurring at a rapid pace.

The effectiveness of this program generated visits from disaster workers such as FEMA, California OES, and local agencies. Currently, we are in the devastating Southern California fires. I have been asked to participate with various State and Local Agencies, FEMA, and EPA to establish regional debris removal MAC teams.

2:00 – 2:50pm

**Cultivating an Environmental Culture in an Industry with a Dirty Reputation**

*Dimitri Gerontis, Director of Operations, Tear A Part, UT*

*Kirsten Brinkerhoff, Environmental Specialist, Tear A Part, UT*

Tear -A-Part has made a concerted effort to make people aware of the technological advances that have helped to change recycling processes and wipe clean the junkyard image. Auto recycling is a “dirty” business that requires management of many hazardous materials. Older methods of recycling automobiles have proven to be damaging to the environment. In the past, the lack of regulatory enforcement allowed enabled recyclers to remain unaware of the potential environmental hazards related to auto recycling. For these reasons, auto recycling has earned a bad reputation that makes it difficult for recyclers to be accepted into new communities.

Tear-A-Part invested in state-of-the-art tooling and drainage equipment for the removal, separation and containment of harmful materials. Our newly developed recycling process incorporates the resale of certain recycled fluids in the retail setting, while other fluids are used to provide fuel for heat.

Tear-A-Part has also taken progressive steps to minimize our environmental impact and ensure a safe workplace for our employees and customers. In addition to completing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, Tear-A-Part has also implemented an Environmental Management System that allows us to examine and minimize the environmental impact of each decision made in the business.

Tear-A-Part has earned recognition from the Utah Pollution Prevention Association, received the Governor’s Best of State award, and was awarded the Commitment to Environmental Protection for Fair Business Practice Standards. Tear-A-Part has also been used as a case study by the Department of Environmental Quality to inform other auto recyclers about the incorporation of Best Management Practices. Tear-A-Part was recognized by Utah Power for our purchase of wind power, and is a member of the E2 Business group in Salt Lake City established to help companies use less energy and minimize pollution. Employee training programs have helped employees understand the potential effects of hazardous materials to their personal health and the environment, as well as their responsibility to keep themselves and their community safe.

Efforts to green the auto recycling industry have proven to be both beneficial and challenging for Tear-A-Part. Through taking a proactive approach to environmental regulation, Tear-A-Part has become an exemplary auto recycling facility. Tear-A-Part has also gained a better understanding of our place in the recycling industry, our responsibility to the community, and our role in keeping our environment clean and safe.

3:00 – 3:50pm

**Brownfields: Removal and/or Reduction of Health Threats to a Community**

*Arcelious Stephens, RES, Brownfields Coordinator, Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality, AZ*

Brownfields are properties that have a stigma associated with environmental contamination...real or perceived. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and EPA provide resources to return these contaminated and potentially contaminated properties back to productive reuse, spurring economic revitalization and growth at these abandoned or underutilized properties. A direct effect of revitalizing many of these properties is the removal of an environmental contaminant that may have been the source of a negative health affect on the local community. Insights into grants from the ADEQ Brownfields Program primarily for Arizona and from the Federal EPA will be presented.

4:00 – 4:50pm

**Discussion of a Strategy for Cleanup of Undocumented Migration (UDM) Waste in the Arizona-Sonora Border Region**

*Frank Zadroga, Environmental Program Specialist, Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality, AZ*

In January of 2007, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), with EPA and *Border 2012* support, began developing a collaborative effort integrated with ongoing federal and tribal work, to assess border cleanup problems and opportunities. This effort seeks to develop and eventually implement a border-wide UDM waste cleanup strategy for Arizona. It would also provide a concept for a UDM waste cleanup organization to help underpin the strategy and future program.

During stakeholder meetings and discussions in three border segments, it has become apparent that undocumented migration leads to significant impacts on the environment, the local economy, and poses certain human-health risks. A conservative estimate of 5,840 tons of UDM waste accumulates annually in Arizona's borderlands. Impacts are not restricted to the immediate border region, and it has been observed that the affected areas expand and fluctuate depending on pressures brought to bear on smuggling operations by the law enforcement agencies. In summary, there is an urgent need to restore the quality, safe use and management of all borderlands impacted by UDM waste through a strategic, multi-constituency, and well coordinated effort.