



BORDER 2012: U.S.- MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

REGIONAL WORKGROUP NEWSLETTER

CALIFORNIA - BAJA CALIFORNIA

Summer 2004

Border 2012: U.S. – Mexico Environmental Program



EPA and SEMARNAT created the ten-year Border 2012 program in partnership with other federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Mexican Secretariat of Health, the ten border-state governments, and U.S. tribal governments. Border 2012 emphasizes a bottom-up approach, anticipating that local decision-making, priority setting, and project implementation will best address environmental issues in the border region. Border 2012 has evolved from previous binational programs: the Integrated Border Environmental Plan and Border XXI.

Regional Workgroups are the foundation of Border 2012. These are multi-media and geographically focused, and emphasize regional public health and environmental issues. They coordinate activities at the regional level and support the efforts of local Task Forces. Each Regional Workgroup has one state and one federal co-chair from each country. Four binational workgroups have been established in the following regions: California-Baja California, Arizona-Sonora, New Mexico-Texas-Chihuahua, and Texas-Coahuila-Nuevo León-Tamaulipas.

This publication focuses on the California - Baja California Regional Workgroup and Task Forces. To learn more about the Border 2012 Program, become involved in the program, view additional documents and related reports, visit the website at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder> or <http://www.semarnat.gob.mx/frontera2012>. ■

MISSION STATEMENT:

"To protect the environment and public health in the U.S.-Mexico border region, consistent with the principles of sustainable development."

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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SAN DIEGO CA 92101

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Notes from Regional Workgroup Meeting in Rosarito

By Domingo Vigil

The California/Baja California Regional Workgroup held its second public bi-national meeting in Rosarito, Baja California, on March 3rd, 2004. The meeting was attended by over 100 people. The presiding workgroup co-chairs were Laura Yoshii, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Enrique Villegas, General Directorate of Ecology (DGE), State of Baja California; Pete Silva, State Water Resources Control Board, representative for Environmental Protection Agency of California (Cal/EPA); and Carlos De La Parra, Federal Delegate for Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), Baja California. Also present was Ricardo Castellanos, Mexico's Federal Environmental Enforcement Agency (PROFEPA), Baja California; and Mirna Borja, Tijuana Municipal Ecology Department, representing Jesús González Reyes, Mayor of the City of Tijuana.

Laura Yoshii and Carlos De La Parra provided an update on the National Coordinators Meeting held in Matamoros, Tamaulipas,

Mexico, on December of 2003. Ms. Yoshii commented that in addition to the four regional workgroups that exist to implement the goals of Border 2012, there are national coordinator meetings to deal with issues at the federal level; although input from regional workgroups helps to define priorities. Furthermore, Mr. De La Parra reflected on the communication gaps that exist along the length of the border and stressed the need to come up with ways of measuring the progress that will be achieved under Border 2012.

During the meeting, reports were given from the different Task Forces.

- **Environmental Education Task Force** – One of the main goals is to ensure that Border 2012 priority issues for the California/Baja California region are comprehensively addressed by environmental education efforts, through fostering understanding and inspiring responsibility for the state of the environment and its relation to the quality of

life in the border region of the Californias. This Task Force is currently in the process of developing a database of environmental education resources.

- **Air Quality Task Force—Imperial Valley/Mexicali** – Currently proposing to review existing policies affecting air quality in the Imperial Valley / Mexicali region to identify which goals have been attained and which are still pending. It is anticipated that this review will define the variables that contribute to air pollution in this region.
- **Air Quality Task Force—San Diego/Tijuana** – The air quality Task Force for the San Diego/Tijuana region was recently established on February 26, 2004. Its first order of business is to take advantage of the advances that have already been made in terms of awareness and development, so that this Task Force can quickly get up to speed and contribute to the goals of the Border 2012 program.
- **Waste and Enforcement Task**

Force - Currently developing a more focused team to work on the projects that have been funded, which include a tire cleanup pilot and development of a decision making framework for cleaning up abandoned waste sites.

- **Water Quality Task Force—Tijuana/ San Diego** – This Task Force was recently formed on February 5, 2004. One of its key activities include community outreach on both sides of the border through stakeholder meetings, to begin engaging with stakeholders on priority water issues in the San Diego/Tijuana region.
- **Water Quality Task Force—Lower Colorado River** – This Task Force was proposed at the first regional workgroup meeting. There is a lot of interest from various border stakeholders and it is anticipated that this Task Force would focus on water quality. The Task Force will focus on building up the various interested groups and then get them to work together.

- **Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force—San Diego/Tijuana** – Emergency response training was a key theme for this Task Force. Lauren Volpini of EPA also provided information on a new EPA sponsored equipment exchange program in order to make available surplus equipment to Mexican emergency responders.
- **Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force—Imperial Valley/Mexicali** – This Task Force is developing the sister city Emergency Response Plan, which was started some time ago. Also, as part of Border



Participants from the Regional Workgroup Meeting in Rosarito, B.C.

2012, this Task Force has been having meetings with the operations center in Imperial County and it will have the chance to have the first real radio communication between operation centers. The operations center in Mexicali will have direct radio communication with the operations center in Imperial County

A report was given on the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) by Crystal Crawford, Councilwoman for the City of Del Mar and member of the association. After talking about the background and structure of the association, Ms. Crawford explained

the main role of the recently instituted Borders Committee, which is to provide policy oversight and recommendations to the Board of Directors on issues related to the international border as well as the counties surrounding San Diego County. Projects that SANDAG currently works on include:

- Working together with the International Community Foundation to support its project to preserve habitat in Northern Baja.
- Supporting the visioning process that is going on with the bi-national watershed advisory council.

- Working jointly with the Council General of Mexico to facilitate discussion on border energy issues.

Javier Díaz De León, Alternate Consul of the Office of the Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego, gave a report on the Border Energy Issues Group (BEIG). Mr. Díaz De León explained that within SANDAG and the Borders Commission, the BEIG has been formed to deal with border energy issues and their impact in the border region. Great efforts have been put into bringing all interested parties to the table for dialogue. These parties include: government agencies, energy experts and envi-

ronmental experts.

Laura Yoshii pointed out the importance of making sure that the Task Forces communicate their efforts to our border stakeholders and our border wide colleagues to avoid duplication of efforts and to further the implementation of projects. She also stressed the importance of incorporating public input into Task Force project planning and implementation.

The next meeting of the National Coordinators was anticipated to be in the February 2005 time frame, in Tucson, Arizona. ■

Environmental Education Task Force Formed

By Erik Lee

The California-Baja California Environmental Education Task Force has the mission of furthering the development of a binational, long-range approach to encouraging citizens to think and act upon environmental challenges facing this unique and rapidly growing region. The Task Force started to convene quarterly meetings beginning in February 2004 and will amplify the work of the Environmental Education Council for the Californias (EECC), a binational network of environmental research, policy, outreach, advocacy, and grassroots hands-on organizations formed in 1998 with the help of the San Diego Border Liaison Office of EPA, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and numerous other organizations.

The California/Baja California EE Task Force will develop its own projects and programs as well as work with other task forces that are currently developing EE components to their work or wish to do so in the future. This will be accomplished through the

development of capacity-building workshops, field trips and field trip binders for EE educators, regranting, and working inclusively to convene as many EE and other environmental organizations as possible in the region to enhance the work of all of these excellent groups. The Task Force will draw its expertise from numerous environmental education groups throughout the region whose work is based on recent, high-quality scientific inquiry into the region's environmental challenges. Many of these groups are already collaborating via the EECC and include key educational and environmental organizations from Mexico and the United States, among them: Proyecto Fronterizo para la Educación Ambiental, the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, ProPeninsula, Proyecto Bioregional de Educación Ambiental (PROBEA), the Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy (SCERP), Environmental Education Exchange, Investigación

y Conservación de Mamíferos Marinos de Ensenada (ICMME), Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), Mar-Vida, and the local Baja California office of the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT). The Task Force will serve as a focal point for convening and diffusing information to an even broader network of EE groups in the region.

The Task Force has held two public meetings in 2004. The first meeting, held on February 5 at the Chula Vista Nature Center, brought together over 40 environmental educators from the region and was essential in convening this expertise to help outline the main EE needs in each of the substantive areas (air, water, etc.). The second meeting, held on May 20 at the Hotel Pueblo Amigo in Tijuana, presented Task Force members with a second opportunity to refine the recommendations for the regranting program which the Task Force is planning to implement beginning in fall 2004. These rec-

ommendations will be used in the development of criteria for environmental education projects consistent with Border 2012 Goals and Objectives and will be incorporated in the call for proposals for the fall regranting program. Additional activities of the EE Task Force include ongoing work on a set of binational, bilingual EE field trip binders, an accompanying workshop on the use of these binders for educators, and the development of an environmental education fair in the fall of 2004.

Co-Chairs for the Task Force are Laura Silvan (Mexico: Director, Proyecto Fronterizo de la Educación Ambiental, 52.664.630.0590, laurie@proyecto Fronterizo.org.mx), and Erik Lee (United States: Assistant Director, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 858.822.0056, ewlee@ucsd.edu). Kama Dean of ProPeninsula serves as the Task Force's Binational Coordinator (kama@propeninsula.org, 619.723.0700). ■

“Conservation and Pollution Prevention at a Shared Border” Curriculum For Schools

By Ricardo Martínez and Paulino Luna



The Cal/EPA Border Affairs Unit, California Integrated Waste Management Board (IWMB), and Baja California K-9 teachers have developed a binational environmental education curriculum, as a result of a Memorandum Of Agreement between the Cal/EPA,

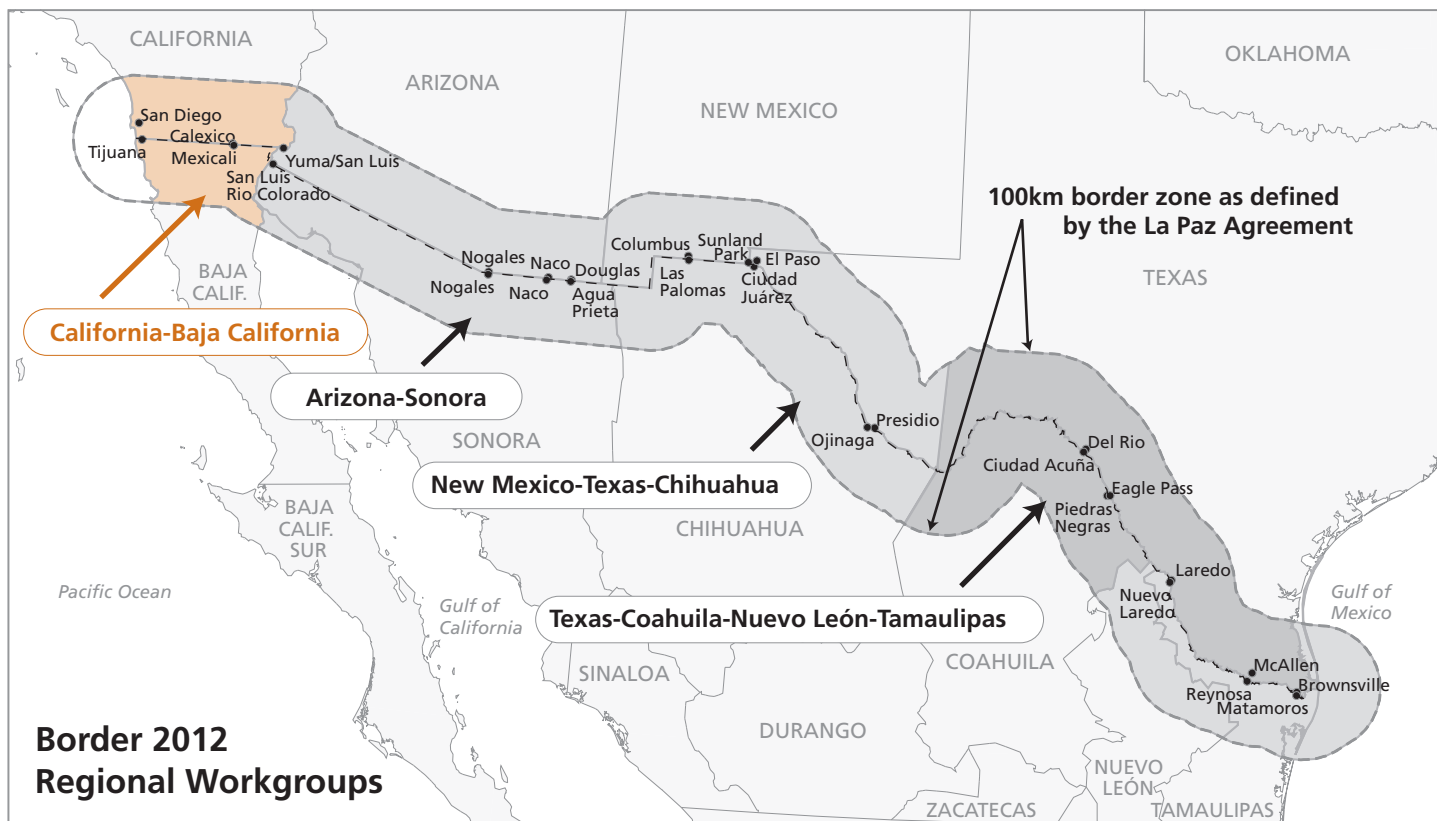
IWMB, SEMARNAT, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), Baja California's Dirección de Ecología (DGE), California Office of the Secretary for Education (OSE), and the Baja California's Education System (SEBS-ISEP). The curriculum, entitled “Conservation and Pollution

Prevention at a Shared Border” includes lessons relevant to prevalent border conditions and consistent with existing environmental education and training principles in California and Baja California. Altogether, the curriculum is 245 pages long, contains 18 lessons, and is divided into five units:

- Unit 1: Natural Resources and Water Conservation
- Unit 2: Water Pollution and Pollution Prevention
- Unit 3: Land Pollution and Pollution Prevention
- Unit 4: Conservation of Electricity
- Unit 5: Air Pollution and Pollution Prevention

Both English and Spanish versions of the curriculum are currently being finalized and will go to print in July 2004. Distribution of the curriculum is expected in August 2004 through a one-day workshop for teachers in the California-Baja California region sponsored by Cal/EPA, DGE and U.S. EPA. The idea is to train teachers on the use of the classroom activities contained in the curriculum. Cal/EPA-IWMB staff will work with those agencies that signed the environmental education MOU. The goal is to reach out to a minimum of 5,000 teachers during 2004 in school districts on both sides of the border. ■





Metales y Derivados Site Awarded Cleanup Funds

By Emily Pimentel

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently awarded \$85,000 in funding towards cleanup activities for the Metales y Derivados (MyD) site located in Tijuana, Mexico. The facility is an abandoned secondary lead smelter, which recovered lead for car batteries. It was owned and operated by a U.S. citizen who abandoned it when it was no longer profitable to operate. Under the Border 2012 Program, the Waste and Enforcement Task Force is responsible for cleaning up abandoned contaminated sites along the length of the border and restoring them to productive use. The cleanup activities will be led by the MyD Cleanup Workgroup established by the Secretary for Environment & Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) and State of Baja California's

Directorate of Ecology (Ecología) with support from the Task Force. SEMARNAT and Ecología are also committed to establishing a formal process to inform and meaningfully involve the community in the clean-up. Mexico has also committed (at the State, Federal and local level) funding to complement the activities that will be funded by EPA. The site contains leaking drums and sacks with toxic concentrations of lead as well as some surface level soil hot spots with extremely high lead concentrations. The MyD Workgroup will define the actual work, but EPA has recommended conducting an interim stabilization action to remove the highest public health risks, before proceeding with a more permanent remedy. ■



Hazardous waste at the Metales y Derivados site

Mexicali II Gets Environmental OK

By Eugenia McNaughton

On December 10, 2003, Wayne Nastri, EPA Region 9 Administrator signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the new Mexicali II project, funded in part by EPA through the North American Development Bank's (NADB) Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF), that will take 12-15 million gallons per day of raw sewage that now flows untreated to the New River into the U.S. at Calexico, to a new wastewater treatment plant south of the city. The treated water will flow into agricultural drains to the Río Hardy, within the Río Colorado delta. The Mexicali Public Utility Commission, CESP, expects to complete the project, including an upgrade to Pump Station 4, a force main from the pump station and the treatment plant, to be built in the unoccupied area south of city called "Las Arenitas". Construction will begin by summer 2004 and be completed by 2006.

For all the familial and commercial connections between citizens of Mexicali and Calexico, the flow of untreated or partially treated sewage from south to north casts relations between the sister cities in a negative light. Almost since the founding of the two cities, the New River, a dry river channel

deepened by the historic breach in an irrigation headworks that caused the Colorado River to flow into the Mexicali/Imperial Valley for 2 years (1905-07), has served as the untreated sewer pipe for these desert communities. But in the U.S., laws passed 50 years ago forced communities to spend money on what is called "environmental infrastructure" (water treatment and distribution systems and wastewater collection and treatment systems). Once those systems were in place, the poor quality of New River water coming across the border became a social, political, as well as environmental, problem.

The "Mexicali II" project is the last part of a \$50M set of projects designed to improve the Mexicali wastewater collection and treatment system that began in 1995. A series of "quick fixes" replaced parts of the big collectors near the border and made improvements to pump stations sending wastewater to the existing treatment plant (Zaragoza). The treatment plant, a series of lagoons, also underwent renovation and process improvements. In December 1997, a set of Mexicali wastewater collection and treatment projects were certified by the Border Environment

Cooperation Commission (BECC). The projects included wastewater collection system projects in the Mexicali I area (the older part of the city, served by the Zaragoza treatment plant). These projects have been under construction since 2000 and will be completed in 2004. The other set of projects, Mexicali II (see above), got as far as the completion of the pump station and the purchase of the pipe for the force main. Then, citizens' complaints about locating

the treatment plant in their neighborhood stopped the project.

The certification of the new project, with the relocation of the Mexicali II wastewater treatment plant, is a testament to the effort that CESP has made to work with all of the group of interested agencies on both sides of the border to solve a long-standing environmental problem. ■



Tribal Update - Tribal Border Coordinators

By Bessie Lee and Linda Reeves

In order to facilitate communication, coordination, and the Border Tribes' participation in Border 2012, EPA will continue to support two Tribal Border Coordinators to lead this effort. The Native American Environmental Protection Coalition (NAEPC) is the Southern California Border Coordinator, with Syndi Smallwood

being the main NAEPC contact. Syndi can be reached at (909) 296-5595. In Arizona, Ty Cañez of the Tohono O'odham Nation is the Arizona Border Coordinator and can be reached at (480) 820-1426 or (602) 565-2752. The Border Coordinators will be meeting with tribes to identify priority environmental issues; disseminat-

ing information about the Border 2012 program, its meetings and workgroup activities, and serving as a resource for the Border Tribes. The Border Coordinators will also organize meetings of the Border Tribes to identify tribal priorities and actions to obtain Border 2012 resources to address these priorities. A meet-

ing of the California Border Tribes is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2004. A meeting of all the 26 Border Tribes is tentatively scheduled for February 2005, prior to the next Border 2012 National Coordinators meeting in Tucson, Arizona. ■

*Sharing Resources:***U.S./Mexico Border Emergency Response Equipment and Assistance Program: www.E-REAP.org***By Lauren Volpini*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has started a program to facilitate the donation of used and surplus emergency response equipment and other resources in the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California border area. This project meets the Goal #5 of the Border 2012 Program to reduce border communities' exposure to chemical substances as the result of accidental releases and/or acts of terrorism by improving the preparedness of first responders on both sides of the border.

A Pressing Need

Many border communities do not have adequate personal protection or emergency response equipment to protect the public health and the environment from accidental or deliberate releases of hazardous materials. A major problem is that the equipment that many border communities possess is often outdated or in disrepair. Funding shortages make it difficult for first responders to obtain training that would improve their ability to handle a wider range of emergencies, beyond the most basic. Yet border cities are the most vulnerable to releases, given the high concentration of cross-border manufacturing operations found there as well as the constant transportation of hazardous materials through their communities.

While border communities struggle to operate with scarce resources, many larger communities throughout California, Arizona and other states regularly dispose of used but perfectly serviceable equipment when they purchase newer models. Manufacturers, distributors or retailers may have an overstock of brand new computers, office supplies or furniture, or may just want to help first responders in need. Trainers of emergency response or hazardous materials management courses may

have extra seats in their classes because of cancellations, or because the room is big enough to hold more than have registered. Surplus equipment is often available from sources such as the military, federal and state agencies, businesses, cleanup contracting firms, and manufacturers; this program seeks to identify these potential donors and pair them with those who need the resources.

Examples of the kinds of equipment, training and other resources that could be provided through this program are:

- **Vehicles** – Fire engines, trailers, tankers, ambulances, cars, trucks, boats, helicopters, airplanes, bulldozers
- **Emergency response equipment** – Hoses, ladders, radios, rappelling gear, jaws of life, extinguishers, firefighting foams, hand tools, spill pads, computers, office furniture, office supplies
- **Personal protective equipment** – Chemical suits, chemical test kits, uniforms, boots, hard hats, respirators, decontamination gear, tents, first aid kits
- **Training** - Emergency medical, hazardous materials, fire prevention, incident command,

confined space entry, counterterrorism, preparedness, traffic control, community relations, media relations, evacuation, emergency management, exercise design.

The Program

A web-based system has been developed to match donations of equipment and other resources with communities that can use them. The website is e-reap.org. The primary recipients for this program will be the emergency responders in the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California area. The program will include promotion and outreach to potential donors in Mexico, California and Arizona, such as larger fire departments, industry, military, manufacturers, business organizations, professional associations, and private sector emergency response departments.

In addition to helping border communities, donors may receive an added benefit: contributions to U.S. state, local, tribal agencies, nonprofit organizations and some Mexican charities can be tax deductible. If the recipient does not meet the criteria for tax deductibility, the E-REAP project manager will help the donor find an eligible charitable organization through which the donation can be made.

The Web site operates in a simple, user-friendly way. Donors are able to post information about the available items or services including pictures, on a website that operates like a message board. The E-REAP project manager will screen postings, contact the poster for any additional information that may be needed,



and help identify potential recipients. On the website, potential recipients are able to search for and browse available offerings. If a potential recipient is interested in a particular item, they are able to send a message to the donor to inquire further and arrange for delivery.

Emergency response agencies also are able to post a description of needed items or services. Potential donors are able to search for and browse these requests for assistance to identify those that they are able to support. The website is hosted by a well-known and proven message board system. The program is now operational.

The key to the ultimate success, longevity and transferability of the E-REAP project will be its ability to establish a system that is independently sustainable, based on ongoing contributions and sponsorships. ■

What You Can Do

- Please visit our web site at www.e-reap.org.
- Review your emergency response equipment inventory.
- Identify surplus items.
- When you update equipment in the future, consider donating replaced items to this program.
- Volunteer your time, funding, training or expertise to help make this program a success.

California/Baja California Regional Workgroup Co-Chairs

Enrique Villegas Director, General Directorate of Ecology State of Baja California	Terry Tamminen Secretary California Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Yoshii Deputy Regional Administrator U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9	Hugo Adriel Zepeda Federal Delegate for Baja California Secretariat for Environment and Natural Resources
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Air Quality—San Diego/Tijuana

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Water Quality—Lower Colorado River

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Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response—San Diego/Tijuana

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Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response—Imperial Valley/Mexicali

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