

# Effective Writing for Superfund Staff: Community Involvement Plans (CIP) and Beyond – Quick Tips Sheet

## CIP Audience and Purpose

**CIP Main Audience:** The community

**CIP Purpose:** To enable *community members* affected by a Superfund site to understand how they can participate in decision making throughout the cleanup process.

The CIP should allow *community members* to understand:

- The Superfund cleanup process.
- How, when and where EPA will provide site-related information.
- How the public can be actively involved in the cleanup process.
- How their issues and concerns were or are incorporated during the cleanup.

## Organize an Effective CIP

- Place most important information first.
- Relate what the community needs to know and do.
- Write key messages and supporting details that are easy to **remember** and **understand**.
- Limit the number of messages.
- Tell the community what they will gain from using your CIP and other materials.

## Effective Writing Techniques

Follow the guidance in the [EPA Communications Stylebook](#) and the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#).

### Use Active Voice

- The subject of the sentence does the action.
- Put the subject near the beginning of the sentence.

Passive Voice	Active Voice
A group of public meetings <u>were facilitated by EPA</u> for the community in regards to the remedial action for the site from 1989 through 1990.	From 1989 through 1990, <b>EPA facilitated a group of public meetings</b> for the community regarding the remedial action for the site.

### Highlight the Positive

- Use an encouraging tone.
- Speak to the audience in plain language.
- Tell your audience what they **should do**, not what they shouldn't do ("Leave the valve open" vs. "Do not close the valve").

### Watch your Language

- Limit the use of jargon, technical or scientific language and unnecessary abbreviations and acronyms.
- Avoid overusing percentages or other numeric statistics. Use words such as "about half" or "nearly all" instead.

## Formatting Effective Documents

- Choose a cover page that is attractive to your audience; first impressions matter.
- Place a simple table of contents in the beginning of the document; use color tabs for each section throughout document.
- Create appendices to move necessary background information to the end of the document.
- To imply chronology, use lists with numbers or letters rather than bulleted lists.

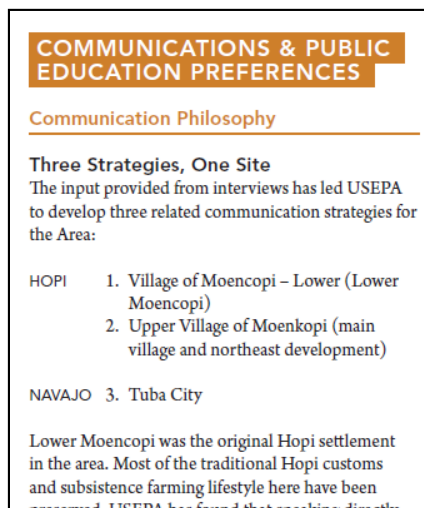


Figure 1: Example of the proper use of font in headings and body text.

1. Use headings and subheadings that convey complete thoughts.
2. Include a map with meaningful landmarks.
3. Use key messages in your captions.
4. Add text boxes and graphics to highlight important information (select images that are familiar and to which the audience can relate).
5. Format text with columns; 2-column is optimal.
6. Present a complete message on one page or two facing pages.
7. Write short lists to avoid a “wall of words.”
8. Allow for white space.

### Heading Text

- Set the font size at least two points larger than body text.
- Select a sans serif font.

### Body Text

- Set font sizes between 12 and 14 points.
- Use dark letters on a light background.
- Include upper and lower case letters.
- Choose a font with serifs.
- Avoid using a fancy font.

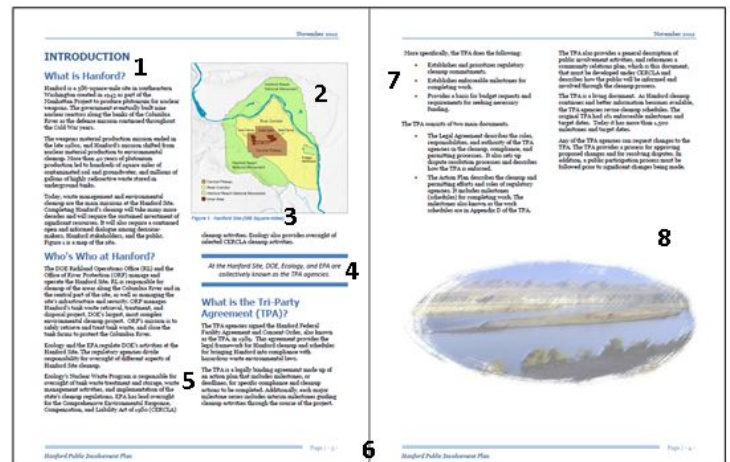


Figure 2: Example of the proper use of formatting techniques (Numbers correspond with the formatting techniques on the left).