



Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC)

GLMAC Resources

The Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Center for Hazardous Substance Research is one of five regional research centers established in 1989 and funded by the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). The Center's mission is to support and conduct innovative research and technology development in hazardous substance control, cleanup and management. The Center has an interdisciplinary group of knowledgeable scientists and engineers who can offer technical advice, review sites, and help increase understanding of hazardous contamination.

Enabling Citizen Participation in Environmental Decision Making

Community involvement is essential to the success of environmental remediation projects. The Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) program facilitates public involvement by providing independent technical expertise to communities with contaminated sites or air quality problems. By becoming knowledgeable about environmental projects, residents can become more actively involved in the process and have an effective voice in determining how the community will respond to the problem. As vested participants in the process, rather than bystanders, citizens are more likely to actively support a remediation plan that they understand and have helped to develop.

Located in the Hazardous Substance Research Center at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Howard University, the TOSC program makes available faculty who are teaching and conducting research in such areas as environmental engineering, toxicology, chemistry, microbiology, environmental law and risk analysis. Program staff, who have backgrounds in both environmental contamination and community relations, coordinate delivery of faculty expertise through public involvement, seminars and workshops, independent review of proposed actions, and development of targeted educational materials.

Funding and Goals

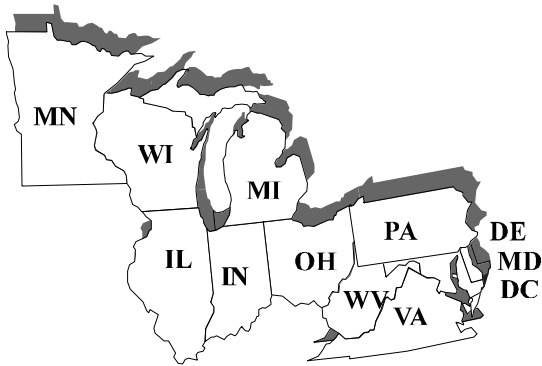
The TOSC program is funded under grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). The program's primary focus is community assistance relating to environmental risk, particularly risks from hazardous waste sites and air pollution. The goals of the program are (1) to focus the technical expertise and educational capabilities of universities on community needs, (2) to develop an understanding of how to most effectively utilize those capabilities at the community level, and (3) to disseminate that understanding to others working in community relations.



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Since 1994, communities have utilized TOSC expertise as an alternative to assistance provided by government agencies or responsible parties. TOSC projects generally address site cleanup or air quality issues and the health effects arising from environmental pollution. The primary motivation for involving universities in the TOSC program is that they are perceived as having independent technical expertise that is not influenced by the adversarial relationships that may exist among regulators, contractors, and responsible parties.

To be eligible for TOSC assistance, a community must be located in the twelve-state region served by the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Center for Hazardous Substance Research (see map below). Projects are active at several sites, and additional site nominations are encouraged.



The Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Center
for Hazardous Substance Research serves
U.S. EPA regions 3 and 5

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