

5-17-2005

Portraying US-Mexico Border Environmental Health Concerns

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Recommended Citation

Aspinall, Erinn; Cindy Love; and Mary Higgins. "Portraying US-Mexico Border Environmental Health Concerns." (2005).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hslic-posters-presentations/75>

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Environmental health concerns along the US-Mexico Border:

A new neighborhood for Tox Town

A US-Mexico Border neighborhood is the latest scene added to Tox Town, a Web-based introduction to environmental health risks and toxic chemicals. Tox Town, <http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov>, invites visitors to explore a border community to learn about air pollution, drinking water quality, workplace hazards, pesticides, rats and snakes, lead poisoning, backyard trash burning, and many other environmental concerns that may affect one's health. New locations to explore in the border scene are an auto shop, *tienda* (corner store), *maquiladora* (factory), crop fields, stormwater and sewage systems, illegal dumps and tire piles, and a *colonia*. Colonias are border communities that lack paved roads, running water, and waste disposal, and are home to over 400,000 people in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

The US-Mexico border region shares many of the same environmental health concerns that can be found anywhere in the US, but also has unique concerns and issues because of its geography, economic development, and lack of municipal services in some locations. The United States, Mexico, state, local, and tribal governments are working together to promote better environmental health in the region through programs such as the U.S.-Mexico Border Environmental Program: Border 2012, <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/>.

Tox Town uses neighborhood scenes, the City, Town, and US-Mexico Border, along with color, graphics, sounds and animation to add interest to learning about connections between chemicals, the environment, and the public's health. Tox Town's target audience is high school, college and graduate students, educators, and the interested public. Tox Town also has a growing number of resources *en español*. Tox Town was recently granted Health on the Net (HON) accreditation by the Health on the Net Foundation.

Tox Town is a project of the Specialized Information Services Division of the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. The new US-Mexico Border scene was developed by a Fellow in the National Library of Medicine Associate Fellowship Program. For information on this postgraduate training program for librarians, see <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/about/training/associate/index.html>.

Promotional materials and Tox Town images for Web sites and publications are listed at <http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov/clipart.html>. Please send your comments or questions on Tox Town to tehip@teh.nlm.nih.gov.

toxtown.nlm.nih.gov

Portraying US-Mexico Border Environmental Health Concerns

Medical Library Association 2005 Poster

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Objective:

Create a Web-based illustrated view of a generic US-Mexico border scene that highlights common environmental health concerns along the border and links to selected web resources on those concerns and on toxic chemicals that might be found in the region.

Methods:

Work closely with librarians, public health workers, educators, and government contacts in the border states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California to ensure that the border scene accurately reflects the "look" of the area and comprehensively represents environmental health concerns in the region. These advisors provided photos and background information, expert review of content, solicited feedback from audiences in the border region, and suggested ideas for introducing this new web resource to both their peers and the concerned public.

Results: The US-Mexico Border neighborhood was released in Spring 2005 as a new scene in Tox Town (<http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov>), the National Library of Medicine web site that introduces toxic chemicals and environmental health issues.

Conclusions: When creating a graphical representation of a specific geographic area and the people who live there, it's crucial to work with local contacts to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness of content and determine usefulness in that region.