SCENARIO I: At approximately 9 am this morning, the Region 8 Phone Duty officer (PDO) received notice from the North Dakota Department of Public Health of a major chemical fire involving the Red River Supply warehouse in Williston, North Dakota (site). The chemical fire started at approximately 2 am this morning and has been burning intensely since. Due to the nature of the fire, which involved significant quantities of chemicals, the local fire department attending the fire decided to let the fire burn itself out with minimal use of water for fire suppression.

The Red River Supply warehouse provides products and materials for the Bakken play oil field. The facility is located on the southeast side of Williston in an industrial area. Residential areas are located approximately one half to three quarters of a mile to the northwest of the site. The City put out an advisory for residents within one half-mile of the site to either evacuate or shelter in place. Stormwater from the site drains to the main storm drainage canal that borders the site on the east side. The canal drains city stormwater as well as treated waste water from Williston's waste water treatment lagoons. The Little Muddy River is immediately to the east and the Missouri River just to the south.

The PDO has determined that you, the Response Duty OSC, should deploy to the fire to provide assistance. So … you grab your gear bag and are ready to leave for the airport.

[Martin, can we get a site map that shows the warehouse, storm drainage, Little Muddy and Missouri River? I'd like to provide the map to each interviewee.]

I. QUESTION(S):

- Before you leave, what additional information do you want to have/know before you arrive at the site and why (describe your rationale for the information/questions you have)?
- What resources or support do you want to have sent to meet you at the site (i.e., equipment, vehicles, contractors, other EPA personnel, etc.) and why (describe your rationale for the information/questions you have)?

SCENARIO II: At 6 pm, you drive up to the facility in your rental vehicle and meet with the Williston Fire Chief who has been at the site since responding at 2:30 am.

II. QUESTION(S):

- What topics/questions do you discuss with the Fire Chief and why (describe your rationale for the information/questions you have)?

SCENARIO III: You and the Williston Fire Chief establish Unified Command and include North Dakota Department Public Health, Williston County Health, Red River Supply environmental contractors (Garner Environmental), and establish response objectives. These objectives are:

1) Safety of human life is top priority (both community and responders);
2) Stabilizing the situation to prevent the event from worsening; and
3) Use all necessary containment and removal tactics in a coordinated manner to ensure a timely, effective response that minimizes adverse impact to the environment.

Now that you're fully briefed and have assessed the situation, you notice that a significantly larger amount of water is being used to suppress the fire than originally reported and the contaminated runoff is approaching the drainage canals.

III. QUESTIONS(S):

- How do approach the Fire Chief about the potential impacts presented by the suppression water runoff to the storm drainage canal and, potentially, the Little Muddy River and Missouri River? Describe your rationale for your approach.

SCENARIO IV: The Red River Supply company provides Safety Data Sheets for the chemicals inside the facility and EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT) advises that particulate matter would be the main concern regarding public exposure from the fire. You initiate air monitoring to assess potential impacts to the community.

Before going to your hotel for a few hours of well-deserved sleep, you call the PDO to give her a status update. The PDO has been trying to call you for over an hour. Many of the community members are concerned about the potential effects of the contaminated smoke on their children and they are also neighbors/good friends with the North Dakota Senator. The Senator has been calling the Regional Administrator criticizing that EPA has been too slow in providing answers to the community. The Senator is demanding EPA take action now(!).

IV. QUESTIONS(S):

- What actions do you take/ what message do you develop (how?) to address the community members' concerns? How do you deliver the message (fact sheet/public meeting/radio/ person-to-person)? And when? Describe your rationale for your approach.

SCENARIO V: You've worked into the night and developed a fact sheet with the Community Involvement Coordinator that has been delivered door-to-door while you slept. The fact sheet announced a community meeting for 10 am this morning and you plan to have the air monitoring data taken overnight to share with the community. You arrive at the site around 9:00 AM to get a quick status update and immediately encounter a news reporter asking about the severity of the situation. Specifically, they ask, "Is the community safe or should the city be evacuated? Should the children be monitored for long-term health effects? Why isn't the fire department working harder to put out the fire? Are the dead fish in the Missouri River a result of chemicals from the fire?" The reporter has a 12 noon deadline.

V. QUESTIONS(S):

- Do you respond and, if so, how do you respond (what information do you share and when)? How does this impact your community meeting? Describe your rationale for your approach.

SCENARIO VI: During the very successful community meeting, you provide the air monitoring data which shows the community has not been exposed to increased health risks. Also, all of the water used to suppress the fire has been contained on site and is being treated before being released to the storm drainage canals. There is no data to indicate that the large number of dead fish in the Little Muddy River are a consequence of the warehouse fire.

Your supervisor calls to direct you to address the fish kill as part of the response. You (respectfully) respond that the technical data and site-specific conditions at the site do not support pursuing the fish kill as part of the response. Your supervisor acknowledges the merits of your response and provides additional understanding that, because of the high media interest and the Senator's strong interest in response, you are being directed to include the fish kill as part of the response.

VI. QUESTIONS(S):

- What do you do next (actions, communications, etc.) and why (describe the rationale for your approach)?