Tiffany Drake

General Engineer

Site Manager

U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management

"I knew I wanted to do something useful, and I thought science had a purpose."

JOB DESCRIPTION

I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT THE SITES I OVERSEE REMAIN PROTECTIVE AND THAT ALL THE WORK WE HAVE COMMITTED TO IS PERFORMED IN A TIMELY AND COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER.

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering (University of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh)
- Professional Engineering License — Environmental Engineering (licensed with the state of Missouri)
- Master of Business Administration, emphasis in management and finance (University of Missouri, Columbia)

1 Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a small, steel mill town, south of Pittsburgh. I learned that my hometown had a smog event in 1940s, where a temperature inversion trapped all the manufacturing pollution in the river valley. This created a lot of breathing problems for people during the event and killed more than 25 people in a few days.

2 How did you decide to become an engineer?

I liked science because it was tangible, had rules to follow, and made sense to me. I especially liked chemistry. As I got older, I knew I wanted to do something useful, and engineering showed me a career where science had a purpose. I needed something with a reason.

Things clicked for me in the 10th grade. While in high school, I attended a university program that featured female engineering students. I listened to these women, and I just knew that's what I wanted to do, too. Also, I did a lot of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in high school, like the Science Olympiad. I competed with a team for six years, and once we won a medal at a state competition.

After high school, I went on to college to study chemical engineering, but that smog event was always in the back of my mind. So, after working in a few jobs in private industry, my first job for the state of Missouri was in the Air Pollution Control Program. I wanted to help clean up communities that were experiencing the same problems suffered by my hometown in the '40s.

3 What projects in your career have you been proud to work on?

There is a site in Kansas City, Missouri, overseen by the National Nuclear Security Administration. The site had antiquated buildings and contamination from on-site manufacturing. By working with regulators,

Continued on Page 2

DOE was able to perform an early transfer of the property to a private entity. We managed to work together to transfer the site quickly, which reduced the overall cost to taxpayers and sped up the timeframe for its revitalization.

4 How does your job affect the world?

My job ensures that LM is overseeing and protecting sites associated with weapons production for World War II and Cold War. It is important to preserve the history of what happened at these places. It's also important to consider their options for beneficial reuse. Revisiting those options is just as important as being able to explain and educate the next generation about their history.

5 Who has been an influential in your life?

I had an art teacher who had three different and unrelated degrees, so I always thought you could do a lot of different things well. He made me aware that there were a lot of different kinds of jobs out there. It never dawned on me that I couldn't do something.

6 Why is STEM important to you?

I'm interested in STEM with LM because I want to see more outreach in the classroom in rural schools, such as those near where I live in rural Missouri. This outreach helps students think beyond the places they live and exposes them to opportunities they might not have known about. I want to provide STEM education and access to STEM resources to everyone, especially younger children.