United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of
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Superfund

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A Citizen's Guide to EPA's Superfund Program

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Office of Emergency & Remedial Response
Washington, DC 20460

PREFACE

IF THERE IS A SUPERFUND SITE in your neighborhood, you are probably wondering, "what will happen?" and, "what can I do?" This brochure will give you a better understanding of the Superfund process and how you can become involved...

Hazardous waste sites pose threats to human health and natural resources.

Superfund cleans up these sites to protect people and the environment, and return the land to productive use.

WHAT IS SUPERFUND?

YEARS AGO, people did not understand how certain wastes might affect people's health and the environment. Many wastes were dumped on the ground, in rivers or left out in the open. As a result, thousands of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites were created. Some common hazardous waste sites include abandoned warehouses, manufacturing facilities, processing plants and landfills.

In response to growing concern over health and environmental risks posed by hazardous waste sites, Congress established the Superfund Program in 1980 to clean up these sites. The Superfund Program is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in cooperation with individual states and tribal governments. Superfund locates, investigates and cleans up hazardous waste sites throughout the United States.

The Superfund Trust Fund was set up to pay for the cleanup of these sites. The money comes mainly from taxes on

the chemical and petroleum industries. The Trust Fund is used primarily when those companies or people responsible for contamination at Superfund sites cannot be found, or cannot perform or pay for the cleanup work.

How Are Superfund Sites Discovered?

HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES are discovered by local and state agencies, businesses, the U.S. EPA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and by people like you. You can report potential hazardous waste sites to the National Response Center Hotline or to your state and local authorities. To report a hazardous waste site, problem, or emergency, you should call the hotline at 1-800-424-8802. This hotline is operated 24-hours-a day, seven-days-a-week.

National Response Center Hotline

If you know of an uncontrolled hazardous waste site or problem, contact the National Response Center Hotline at ***1-800-424-8802****. The hotline is operated 24-hours-a-day to receive emergency calls.*

Superfund quickly responds to chemical emergencies to ensure your safety.

What Happens When There Is A Chemical Emergency?

A NUMBER OF THE SITES reported to the National Response Center are emergencies and require immediate action. Emergency actions eliminate immediate risks to ensure your safety. Superfund's number one priority is to protect the people in communities near sites and their environment.

Superfund personnel are on call to respond at a moment's notice to chemical emergencies, accidents, or releases. Typical chemical emergencies may include train derailments, truck accidents, and incidents at chemical plants where there is a chemical release or threat of a release to the environment. Superfund may respond, or may help state and local authorities to deal with these emergencies quickly. The hazardous materials are hauled away from the site for treatment or proper disposal, or they are treated at the site to make them safe. The risk to the community is removed.

In an emergency situation, you and your community will be kept informed of the situation and what steps are being taken to ensure your safety. EPA then evaluates the site and determines whether additional cleanup is necessary.

What Happens To Sites That Are Not Emergencies?

When a potential hazardous waste site is reported, EPA screens the site to determine what type of action is necessary. EPA reviews existing data, inspects the site, and may interview nearby residents to find out the history and the effects of the site on the population and the environment.

Many of the sites that are screened do not meet the criteria for Federal Superfund cleanup action. Some sites do not require any action, while others are referred to the states, other programs, other agencies or individuals for cleanup, or other action.

Early Action

Early Actions are taken when EPA determines that a site may become a threat to you or your environment in the near future. For example, there may be a site where leaking drums of hazardous substances could ignite or cause harm to you if touched or inhaled. In an instance such as this, EPA takes steps to make sure the situation is quickly addressed and the site is safe. Typically Early Actions are taken to:

- *prevent direct human contact with the contaminants from the site;*

- *remove hazardous materials from the site;*
- *prevent contaminants from spreading off the site;*
- *provide water to residents whose drinking water has been contaminated by the site; or*
- *temporarily or permanently evacuate/relocate nearby residents.*

Early Actions may take anywhere from a few days to five years to complete depending on the type and extent of contamination. EPA also determines if Long-Term Action will be necessary.

For the remaining sites, EPA tests the soil, water, and air to determine what hazardous substances were left at the site and how serious the risks may be to human health and the environment. Parties responsible for the contamination at the site may conduct these assessments under close EPA supervision. Their involvement in the study and cleanup process is critical in order to make best use of Superfund resources. EPA uses the information collected to decide what type of action, if any, is required.

At this point, EPA prepares a Community Relations Plan (CRP) to ensure community involvement. This plan is based on discussions with local leaders and private citizens in the community. In addition, EPA sets up a local information file in the community so that citizens can have access to information about the site. The information file or "repository" is usually located at a library or public school and contains the official record of the site, reports and activities (called the Administrative Record), as well as additional site-related information.

Who Is Involved In Superfund Cleanups?

Superfund cleanups are very complex and require the efforts of many experts in science, engineering, public health, management, law, community relations, and numerous other fields. The goal of the process is to protect you and the environment you live in from the effects of hazardous substances.

Your involvement is very important. You have the opportunity and the right to be involved in and to comment on the work being done.

What Is The National Priorities List?

The National Priorities List (NPL) is a published list of hazardous waste sites in the country that are eligible for extensive, long-term cleanup action under the Superfund program.

Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program

EPA values your input and wants to help you understand the technical information relating to the cleanup of Superfund sites in your community so that you can make informed decisions.

Under the Superfund law, EPA can award Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) of up to $50,000 per site. TAGs allow communities to hire an independent expert to help them interpret technical data, understand site hazards, and become more knowledgeable

about the different technologies that are being used to cleanup sites.

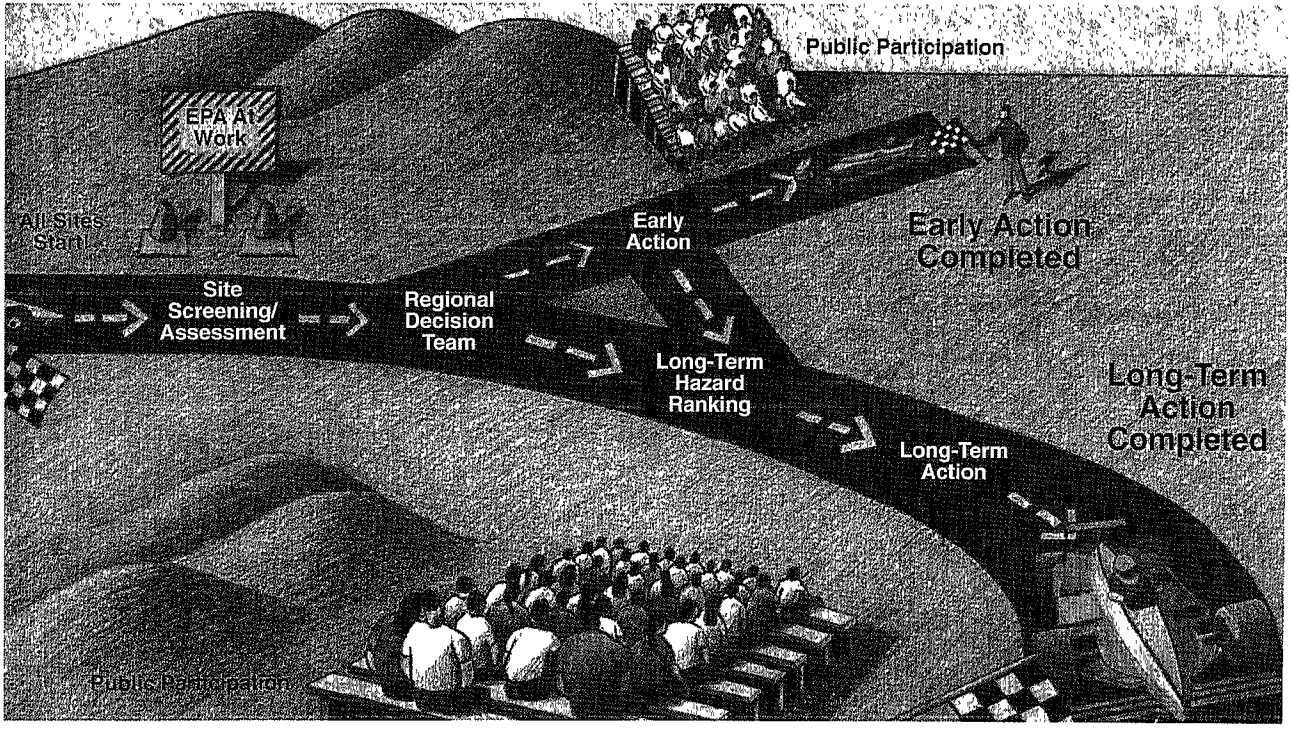
Your community group may be eligible for a TAG if you are affected by a Superfund site that is listed or proposed for listing on the National Priorities List.

More information about TAGs is available from your Regional EPA Community Relations Coordinator. An address and number where your coordinator can be reached is listed in the back of this brochure.

How Do The Sites Get On The National Priorities List?

To evaluate the dangers posed by hazardous waste sites, EPA has developed a scoring system called the Hazard Ranking System (HRS). EPA uses the information collected during the assessment phase of the process to score sites according to the danger they may pose to public health and the environment. Sites that score high enough on the HRS are eligible for the NPL. Once a site is scored and meets the criteria, EPA proposes that it be put on the List. A site may also be proposed for the NPL if the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry issues a health advisory for the site or if the site is chosen as the state's top priority site. The proposal is published in the *Federal Register* and the public has an opportunity to comment in writing on whether the site should be included on the NPL. To obtain more information on a proposed site, contact your Community Relations Coordinator.

THE SUPERFUND PROCESS



The Superfund process begins when a site is discovered. After EPA screens and assesses the site, the Regional Decision Team determines if the site requires Early Action, Long-Term Action, or both. Early Actions are taken at sites that may pose threats to people or the environment in the near future. Long-Term Actions are taken at sites that require extensive cleanup. EPA encourages community involvement throughout the Superfund process.

What Happens During A Long-term Cleanup?

LONG-TERM CLEANUPS are extensive. Built into this process are several phases that lead to the ultimate goal of cleaning up the site and providing a safe environment for the citizens living near the site. Throughout the process, there is opportunity for citizen involvement.

First, a detailed study of the site is done to identify the cause and extent of contamination at the site, the possible threats to the environment and the people nearby, and options for cleaning up the site.

EPA uses this information to develop and present a Proposed Plan for Long-Term Cleanup to citizens and to local and state officials for comment. The Proposed Plan describes the various cleanup options under consideration and identifies the option EPA prefers. The community has at least 30 days to comment on the Proposed Plan. EPA invites community members to a pub-

lic meeting to express their views and discuss the Plan with EPA (and sometimes state) officials.

Once the public's concerns are addressed, EPA publishes a Record of Decision, which describes how the Agency plans to clean up the site. A notice is also placed in the local newspaper to inform the community of the cleanup decision.

Next, the cleanup method is designed to address the unique conditions at the site where it will be used. This is called the Remedial Design.

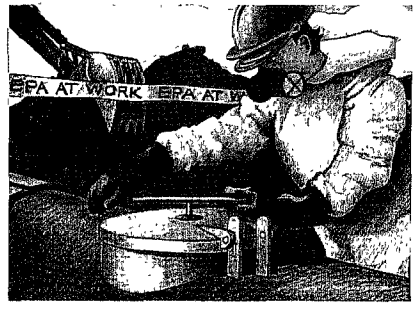
The design and actual cleanup is conducted by EPA, the State, or by the parties responsible for the contamination at the site. EPA closely oversees this design phase and the development of the cleanup at the site. When the design is completed, EPA prepares and distributes a fact sheet to the community describing the design and the action that will take place at the site.

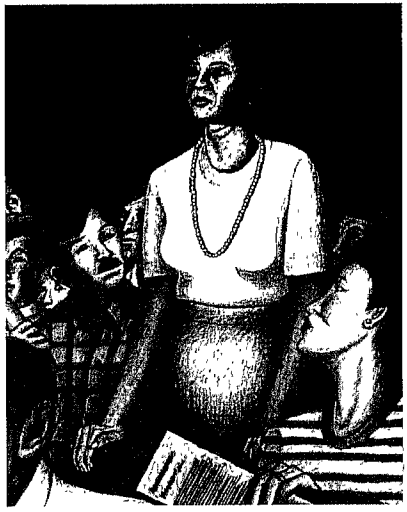
EPA can put in place the equipment and manpower necessary to clean up a site, but it may take a long time to return a site to the way it was

Long-Term Actions

Early Actions can correct many hazardous waste problems and eliminate most threats to human health and the environment. Some sites, however, require Long-term Action. Long-term Actions include restoring groundwater and taking measures to protect wetlands, estuaries, and other ecological resources.

These sites were caused by years of pollution and may take several years, even decades, to clean up.





Superfund involves local communities to ensure that their concerns regarding hazardous waste sites are addressed.

before it was contaminated. Some sites, due to the extent of contamination, will never return to the way they were prior to the pollution; however, EPA will make sure that the site will be safe for the people living around the site now and in the future. EPA regularly monitors every NPL site to make sure it remains safe. If there is any indication that a problem has arisen, immediate action will be taken to make the site safe again.

Who Pays For Superfund Cleanup?

SUPERFUND CLEANUP is either paid for by the parties responsible for contamination or by the Superfund Trust Fund. Under the Superfund law, EPA is able to make those companies and individuals responsible for contamination at a Superfund site perform, and pay for, the cleanup work at the site. EPA negotiates with the responsible parties to get them to pay for the plans and the work that has to be done to clean up the site. If an agreement cannot be reached,

EPA issues orders to responsible parties to make them clean up the site under EPA supervision. EPA may also use Superfund Trust Fund money to pay for cleanup costs, then attempt to get the money back through legal action.

CONCLUSION

EPA'S SUPERFUND PROGRAM is the most aggressive hazardous waste cleanup program in the world. Everyday, Superfund managers are involved in critical decisions that affect public health and the environment. They use the best available science to determine risks at sites. New and innovative technologies are being developed to help achieve faster and less expensive ways to cleanup sites. And, where possible, old hazardous waste sites are being restored to productive use. Millions of people have been protected by Superfund's cleanup actions.

The Superfund Program has one ultimate goal: to protect YOUR health and YOUR environment.

Superfund ensures that the parties responsible for the pollution pay their fair share.

Protecting communities and the environment is what Superfund is all about.

EPA Superfund Community Relations Offices

EPA wants to remain accessible and responsive to your concerns. Our Community Relations staff is available to answer any questions you may have regarding a Superfund site or an area you think may be a site. Here is a complete list of EPA's Regional Offices.

REGION 1
(CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-3425

REGION 2
(NJ, NY, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)
26 Federal Plaza
New York, NY 10278
(212) 264-7054

REGION 3
(DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV)
841 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 597-9905

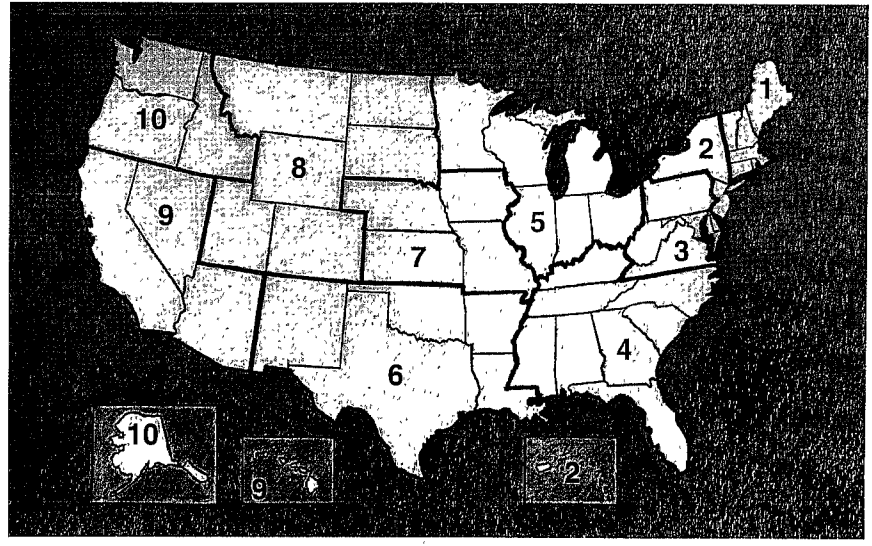
REGION 4
(AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)
Waste Management Division
345 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30365
(404) 347-2643

REGION 5
(IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)
Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 886-6685

REGION 6
(AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)
First International Bank
Tower & Fountain Place
1445 Ross Avenue, 12th Floor
Dallas, TX 75270
(214) 633-6617

REGION 7
(IA, KS, MO, NE)
726 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 551-7003

REGION 8
(CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY)
999 18th Street
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 294-1144



NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE (NTIS)

If you wish to obtain additional copies of this document, contact:

National Technical Information Service (NTIS)
U.S. Department of Commerce
5285 Port Royal Road
Springfield, VA 22161
(703) 487-4600

REGION 9
(AZ, CA, HI, NV, American Samoa, Guam)
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 744-2178

REGION 10
(AK, ID, OR, WA)
1200 6th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 553-1272

National Response Center
Hotline: 1-800-424-8802

Superfund Information
Hotline: (703) 412-9810