



Environmental Fact Sheet

The National Corrective Action Prioritization System

Corrective Action: A Background

In 1984, Congress amended the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and provided EPA with broad new authorities to require clean-up, or "corrective action", at hazardous waste management facilities. Corrective action can involve a wide variety of activities, including cleanup of contaminated environmental media such as soils and ground water, treatment of the sources of contamination, and actions to control or prevent exposure to contamination. EPA can require corrective action at facilities that have RCRA permits as well as at facilities that are operating under "interim status."

Setting Priorities

Currently, there are approximately 4,300 facilities that treat, store, or dispose of hazardous wastes, which can be compelled to take corrective action when necessary. Some facilities are very large and have extensive contamination problems which rival the largest Superfund sites. Other facilities have relatively minor environmental problems. Still others will not need remedial action at all. Given this diversity, the large number of RCRA facilities, and the technical complexities of remediation, EPA and the States

must set priorities in deciding which facilities should receive attention, and when.

What is NCAPS?

It is EPA's policy to compel corrective action at the "worst sites first." As a result, the Agency has developed a system for assessing the relative environmental cleanup priority of RCRA facilities, called the National Corrective Action Prioritization System (NCAPS). This system is intended to provide a nationally consistent approach to assessing site factors that drive cleanup priority decisions.

NCAPS is a computer-based system that considers a variety of environmental factors in assessing the priority of sites, such as the types and volumes of wastes present, contaminant release pathways, and the potential for exposure to contaminants by humans and ecosystems. In this sense, the system is similar to the Hazard Ranking System (HRS) used by the Superfund program. However, NCAPS is designed to be a less resource intensive system to use, and provides priority rankings with less site data than is normally required for HRS scoring.

NCAPS Ranking

NCAPS generates a High, Medium or Low ranking for each facility. The ranking is based on an evaluation of four pathways of actual or potential contamination (ground water, surface water, air and soils) and nationally-established criteria for determining High/Medium/Low. The information needed for running the system is usually obtained from initial assessments of facilities conducted by EPA or authorized States. EPA expects that such assessments (commonly called RCRA Facility Assessments, or RFAs) will have been completed, and NCAPS rankings determined, for nearly all RCRA facilities by the end of 1993.

A facility's ranking may change based on new or additional information or as a result of a remedial action at the site. Consequently, the rankings generated by the NCAPS system may also change. In addition, the Agency expects to make refinements to NCAPS based on the operating experience of EPA and the authorized States. Such changes could also affect the scores of some sites.

How NCAPS Rankings Are Used

EPA and the authorized States use the High/Medium/Low rankings to identify the general priority for initiating cleanup of facilities through either permits or enforcement orders. However, a facility's NCAPS ranking is not the only factor in determining when corrective action will be initiated. Other factors, such as the enforcement history of the facility, the need to address the facility in the context of a regional environmental initiative (e.g., EPA's Great Lakes Initiative), or other special conditions at the site, can also play a role in determining which facilities are a high priority for corrective action.

RCRA: Beyond Corrective Action

In addition to corrective action, the RCRA program is responsible for ensuring that hazardous waste management facilities comply with a wide range of "prevention" requirements designed to minimize the risk of future contamination problems. To this end, issuing operating permits and enforcing RCRA regulatory requirements are also important program priorities. Balancing and integrating the cleanup and prevention goals of the RCRA program is a continuing challenge for EPA and the States. Further information on EPA's overall strategy for implementing the RCRA program is provided in the EPA RCRA Implementation Plan, which is updated annually and is available from EPA Regional Offices or the RCRA Hotline (see below).

For Further Information

Further information on the NCAPS system may be obtained by contacting RCRA program staff in EPA's Regional Offices. Inquiries may be directed to:

Region I	(617) 573-5700
Region II	(212) 264-2301
Region III	(215) 597-8131
Region IV	(404) 347-3454
Region V	(312) 886-7579
Region VI	(214) 655-6700
Region VII	(913) 551-7050
Region VIII	(303) 293-1720
Region IX	(415) 744-1730
Region X	(206) 553-2808

For additional information on the general RCRA program, or for additional copies of this Fact Sheet, call the RCRA Hotline at (800) 424-9346, or TDD (800) 551-7672 for the hearing impaired. In the Washington, D.C. metro area, the numbers are (703) 920-9810 or TDD (703) 486-3323.