



# Superfund: Future Strategy and Directions

When Superfund was established in 1980, EPA and Congress believed that only a few hundred sites nationwide would require cleanup. Congress directed EPA to clean up acute threats that posed immediate risks to human health and the environment. Congress also directed the Agency to evaluate additional hazardous waste sites as they were discovered and to place the most dangerous sites on a National Priorities List (NPL).

## A Big Job

When Superfund was reauthorized six years later, it was apparent that the problem of uncontrolled hazardous waste sites was larger than anyone had believed originally. More than 28,000 sites had been scheduled for preliminary review; more than 900 sites had been placed on the NPL; and more than 800 emergency actions had been taken.

The program's progress increased dramatically with the passage of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), which quadrupled the resources available to Superfund. But it was clear that the growing size of the hazardous waste problem — and EPA's growing understanding of the complexity of site cleanups — called for a new strategy.

## A New Strategy

In June 1989, EPA Administrator William Reilly's *Superfund Management Review*, also known as the *90-Day Study*, articulated a new strategy for the Superfund program. The strategy emphasizes:

- Increased use of EPA's enforcement powers to force potentially responsible parties to clean up problems they create; and
- A revitalization of the Agency's approach to pay for site cleanups out of the Superfund Trust Fund.

Simply stated, the new strategy emphasizes addressing the worst problems at the worst sites first, in accordance with the Agency's goal of overall risk reduction. Employing this new strategy, EPA will:

- Use enforcement first to compel private party response,
- Make sites safe from acute threats,
- Make sites clean over the long term, and
- Bring new technology to bear on the problem of hazardous waste contamination.

The new strategy also calls for EPA to improve program efficiency, encourage public involvement in program decisions, and communicate program success more clearly.

Superfund is making solid progress in implementing the strategy, and for the first time in the program's history the cost of projects in the construction pipeline exceeds the available funding.

Cleanup of sites already on the NPL is expected to cost an additional \$19 billion beyond the \$7.5 billion already obligated. And the NPL is expected to grow from approximately 1,200 sites to more than 2,000 sites by the end of the century.