

How Cleanup Works

Background

This fact sheet provides a summary of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's site cleanup process. These stages can vary from site to site, and not all steps are necessary in every case, such as with simpler sites where the path to cleanup is clear and there is minimal risk to humans or the environment.

How does cleanup work?

Once contaminated sites enter the DEQ regulatory process for cleanup, they proceed through several stages to reach a final No Further Action determination and regulatory close out. These stages can vary based on the specifics of the site. For example, some simpler sites may have cleanups completed, determined to pose no risk above State standards, and then be closed out without completing all the process that a larger more complex site would go through.

While there are variety of components that may be part of the process at any particular site, the most common steps at complex sites can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Remedial Investigation:** Sampling and testing determines what contamination is present, how much and where it is located.
- 2. Risk Assessment:** The results of the sampling data are used to determine if contaminants exceed the State's standards for risk for people and, if applicable, the environment.
- 3. Feasibility Study:** Cleanup alternatives are evaluated based on effectiveness, ability to implement, long-term reliability, implementation risk and reasonableness of cost.
- 4. Record of Decision:** This is the documentation of the selected remedial action and is finalized after public review and comment.
- 5. Cleanup:** The final cleanup is implemented and documented according to the Record of Decision.
- 6. No Further Action:** This term means that the site is closed from a regulatory perspective. Long-term site requirements may be recorded with the deed (e.g. monitoring, restrictions, etc.).

At any time during the investigation or risk assessment processes, the decision may be made to take immediate action to remove contamination if doing so is necessary to prevent, minimize, or mitigate damage to the public health, safety and welfare of people and the environment.

Frequently asked questions

What is a brownfield?

A brownfield is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of contamination. DEQ uses federal grant funding to work with communities, organizations and other government agencies to facilitate redevelopment on these sites.

How does a site get chosen to be cleaned up?

DEQ offers three pathways for review and approval of cleanups conducted by property owners: Independent Cleanup, Voluntary Cleanup, and Site Response. Independent and Voluntary Cleanup are for property owners who decide to cleanup their property. The difference is that Voluntary Cleanup program sites are typically more complex and require more DEQ oversight than Independent Cleanup sites. In the Site Response program, DEQ requires cleanup through orders, and potentially enforcement actions, for high environmental priority sites.

What type of oversight does DEQ provide?

DEQ reviews sampling data, methodology and reporting from each of the stages listed above.

How do I know if a site near me is in the Cleanup Program?

Use DEQ's Environmental Cleanup Site Information database at: go.usa.gov/xVvWw

Who pays for sites to get cleaned up?

Sites that enter DEQ's Cleanup Program through any of the above-listed pathways are paid for by the owner or party responsible for the contamination. There are sites called Industrial Orphan Sites where the parties responsible for the contamination are unknown, unable or unwilling to pay for cleanup.

Why would a property owner choose to cleanup a site?

Cleanup of a site and the resulting No Further Action certification from DEQ allows the property to be more easily developed or sold.

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.



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