

Lower Neponset River Superfund Workshop | November 2022

Glossary

Administrative Record

A collection of documents that contains information considered by EPA or other lead agency when selecting a response action under CERCLA. The Record is typically made available for public review at an information repository near the Site, at the regional EPA office and on an EPA website.

Aquifer

An underground geological formation containing water. Aquifers are sources of groundwater for wells and springs.

Cleanup

The term used for actions taken to deal with a release or threat of release of a hazardous substance that could affect human health and/or the environment. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms remedial action, removal action, response action and corrective action.

Community Advisory Group (CAG)

A Superfund Community Advisory Group (CAG) is a committee, task force or board made up of residents of a community with Superfund or other environmental problems. The Community Advisory Group enhances public participation in the cleanup process and other environmental decision-making by providing a public forum where community representatives can discuss their diverse interests, needs and concerns.

Community Involvement

The community relations activities (e.g., plan, implementation and responsiveness summary) that must be completed at a site to address community concerns.

Community Involvement Plan (CIP)

A document that identifies techniques used by EPA to communicate effectively with the public during the Superfund cleanup process at a specific site. A CIP typically describes the site history, nature and history of community involvement, and concerns expressed during community interviews. In addition, the plan outlines methodologies and timing for continued interaction between the agencies and the public at the site.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) (commonly known as Superfund)

A law, enacted by Congress in December 1980, that created the Superfund program. CERCLA provides EPA with the authority to clean up contaminated sites and identifies parties that may be held responsible for performing cleanup work or reimbursing the government for cleanup costs.

Concentration

The amount of a chemical in a given volume of air, water or other medium.

Contaminants of Concern (COC)

Chemicals identified during in-depth site studies (Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study) that need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they pose a potential threat to human health or the environment.

Conflict Prevention Resolution Center (CPRC)

The CPRC is EPA's primary resource for conflict resolution and provides training and support to EPA staff to help them work more effectively, strategically, and transparently with states, tribes, and local stakeholders to achieve better environmental outcomes.

Environmental Justice (EJ)

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD)

A document that describes significant changes to a Superfund cleanup plan (i.e., a ROD) and the reasons for the changes.

Exposure

Contact with a substance by swallowing, breathing, or touching the skin or eyes. Exposure may be short-term (acute exposure), of intermediate duration, or long-term (chronic exposure).

Extraction Well

Extraction wells are used to pump groundwater to the surface, where the contaminants are removed.

Feasibility Study (FS)

A process followed at most Superfund sites to evaluate potential cleanup alternatives.

Five-Year Review

A periodic review of a Superfund site that is generally required when hazardous substances remain on site above levels that permit unrestricted use and unlimited exposure. The purpose of a Five-Year Review is to evaluate the implementation and performance of a remedy and whether a remedy remains protective of public health and the environment.

Groundwater

The supply of fresh water found beneath the surface of the earth.

Hazard Ranking System (HRS) Score

The Hazard Ranking System (HRS) is the principal screening tool used by EPA to evaluate relative risks to public health and the environment associated with abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. The HRS is a screening tool and not a site-specific risk assessment. The HRS calculates a site score between 0 and 100 based on the actual and/or potential releases of hazardous substances from the site through the air, surface water, or groundwater, or the actual and/or potential exposure of receptors by coming into contact with contamination. The score is based on many other factors such as density and proximity of human population to contamination. A site receiving an HRS score of 28.5 or above is eligible for placing on the National Priorities List (NPL). This score is the primary factor in deciding if the site should be on the NPL and has no significance as an indicator of a specific risk level to people or environmental receptors. The limited data used to develop the HRS score are designed to support site screening and are not intended to provide support for a quantitative risk assessment. The HRS, therefore, is a mechanism that allows EPA to make objective decisions on national priorities across sites nation-wide.

Information Repository

A collection of technical reports and other documents regarding a Superfund site. The information repository is usually located in a public building that is convenient for local residents, such as a public school, city hall or library.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)

The highest level of a contaminant allowed in drinking water by EPA or state regulations. These levels are based on consideration of health risks, technical feasibility of treatment and a cost-benefit analysis.

Monitoring Well

Monitoring wells are used to make subsurface measurements and collect samples to determine the amounts, types and distribution of contaminants in groundwater.

National Contingency Plan (NCP)

The federal government's blueprint for responding to oil spills and releases of hazardous substances.

National Priorities List (NPL)

EPA's list of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for possible long-term remedial action under the Superfund program. A site must be on the NPL to receive money from the Superfund Trust Fund for remedial action.

Operable Unit (OU)

During cleanup, a site can be divided into a number of distinct areas depending on the complexity of the problems associated with the site. These areas called operable units may address geographic areas of a site,

specific site problems, or areas where a specific action is required. An example of a typical operable unit could include removal of drums and tanks from the surface of a site.

Potentially Responsible Party (PRP)

Any individual or company--including owners, operators, transporters or generators--potentially responsible for, or contributing to a spill or other contamination at a Superfund site. Whenever possible, through administrative and legal actions, EPA requires PRPs to clean up hazardous sites they have contaminated.

Preliminary Assessment

An assessment of information about a site and its surrounding area. A Preliminary Assessment is designed to determine whether a site poses little or no threat to human health and the environment or if it does pose a threat, whether the threat requires further investigation.

Record of Decision

A public document that explains which cleanup alternative(s) will be used at National Priorities List sites.

Remedial Action

The actual construction or implementation phase of a Superfund site cleanup that follows remedial design.

Remedial Design

Remedy design (RD) is the phase in Superfund site cleanup where the technical specifications for cleanup remedies and technologies are designed.

Remedial Investigation

An investigation intended to gather the data necessary to: (1) determine the nature and extent of problems at the site; (2) establish cleanup criteria for the site; (3) identify preliminary alternative remedial actions; and (4) support the technical and cost analyses of the alternatives.

Remedy

The method selected to clean up a Superfund site.

Removal

A removal is a short-term cleanup intended to stabilize or clean up a site that poses an imminent and substantial threat to human health or the environment. Removals can occur at any stage of the Superfund cleanup process, but are often the first response upon discovery of a hazardous substance at a site.

Removal Action

Short-term actions that address releases of hazardous substances that require expedited responses.

Risk/Health Assessment

At each site, EPA determines the possibility for human and ecological contact (i.e., exposure) with contaminants at the site. If the possibility for exposure to contamination exists, EPA conducts a study known as a risk assessment. During the risk assessment, EPA determines if the site poses a risk to humans, and if so, identifies actions that can be taken to control any possible exposure to humans until site cleanup has been completed. Once complete, cleanup provides long-term human health and environmental protection at the site.

Site Inspection (SI)

A Site Inspection (SI) is the process of collecting site data and samples to characterize the severity of the hazard ranking score (HRS) and/or for enforcement support. SI investigators typically collect environmental and waste samples to determine what hazardous substances are present at a site. They determine if these substances are being released to the environment and assess if they have reached nearby targets.

Superfund

The common name used for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Superfund activities include conducting and/or supervising hazardous waste site cleanups and other remedial actions.

Technical Assistance

The provision of services focused on increasing community understanding of the science, regulations and policies related to environmental issues and EPA actions.

Technical Assistance Grant (TAG)

Technical Assistance Grants of up to \$50,000 are provided to citizens' groups to obtain assistance in interpreting information related to cleanups at Superfund sites or those proposed for the National Priorities List. Grants are used by such groups to hire technical advisors to help them understand the site-related technical information for the duration of response activities.

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA)

The evaluation of whether a community needs additional support from EPA to understand technical information and to enable meaningful community involvement in the Superfund decision-making process.

Vapor Intrusion (VI)

A process where vapors from VOC contamination in groundwater make their way into indoor air.

Volatile Organic Compound (VOC)

Organic compounds that have relatively low boiling temperatures and high vapor pressure at room temperature. VOCs are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids.

