



## Attachment 2: Frequently Asked Questions at Superfund, Environmental Cleanup, and Hazardous Waste Sites

### Site-Specific Questions

1. What are the contaminants of concern?
2. How much contamination is there?
3. How widespread is the contaminant?
4. Is the contamination moving, and if so, in what direction?
5. Where did the contamination come from?
6. Who brought it to your attention?
7. Are there any other contaminants besides the ones we were told about?
8. How can you be sure there are no other contaminants?
9. How will you decide where to sample and where not to sample?
10. Who is responsible for cleaning up the contamination?
11. Who is going to perform the cleanup?
12. How long will the cleanup take?
13. What about schools nearby?
14. When will you start cleanup?

### Investigation/Data Concerns

1. Do I have to give you access to sample my property?
2. What if I refuse access to my property?
3. Would EPA take samples on my property upon my request?
4. Can I see the results of the testing you've done on my property?
5. Can I see the results of testing you've done on other properties in the neighborhood?
6. I'm moving into the area; can I see the results of sampling that's been done?
7. Who will be doing the sampling?
8. How can we be sure the sampling data is accurate?
9. Can you guarantee the accuracy of sampling results?
10. How can we be sure that future sampling won't find things that you didn't find now?
11. What is the worst-case scenario?
12. Where else has this happened?
13. Where can I get more information about similar sites that have already been cleaned up?
14. Can damages be reversed?
15. What is the evidence that my drinking water is contaminated or my yard has contaminated soil?
16. Why hasn't my well or home been sampled?

### Health Questions

1. Am I at risk from the contamination?
2. What are my past exposures?
3. How could I have been exposed?
4. What are the risks to my children?
5. I'm pregnant (or planning to be). Will the contaminants affect my unborn child?
6. What health effects can I expect to see if I've been exposed to site contaminants?
7. Have any health problems been reported so far?
8. How many people have become ill as a result of the site?
9. Does this explain why \_\_\_\_\_ is sick?
10. I have a recent health problem (i.e., headaches, rashes, etc.) that I never had before; could the site contamination have caused this problem?





11. What does my doctor know about this?
12. Is my doctor qualified?
13. Is there any medical person I can talk to about what I am experiencing to see if it is related to the contamination I may have been exposed to?
14. Will EPA pay my medical bills? (*EPA cannot pay medical bills. It is suggested that you contact your local health department for information on how you may be able to get assistance.*)
15. Can you set up a temporary, local health center or clinic where we can be tested?
16. Where can I go to learn more about the risk from the site?
17. What are the short-term effects?
18. What are the long-term effects?
19. Can you guarantee we won't get cancer in 30 years?
20. What is the risk of dying from cancer?
21. Are you going to test residents for exposure?
22. Can we drink the water/breathe the air?
23. Is it safe to bathe or shower in the water?
24. Is it safe to water our lawns with the potentially contaminated water?
25. Is it safe to mow our lawns if the soil underneath is potentially contaminated?
26. Can I eat food from my garden?
27. Will you provide us with bottled water?
28. Why have some people received bottled water and not others?
29. What are the impacts to natural habitat (i.e., fish and other species)?
30. Is it safe to use the river for fishing and other recreational purposes?
31. How do you know whether it's safe to go fishing?
32. Is it safe to eat the fish?
33. Can my children play outside?
34. What are the risks to my pets?
35. Why is EPA wearing protective clothing and we are not?
36. What can I do to protect myself and my family?
37. What's being done right now to protect my health and the health of my family?
38. Will capping the site protect my health?
39. What happens if my ventilation system shuts down?
40. What is the ATSDR?
41. What is a Public Health Assessment?
42. How do we get rid of the risk?

## Cleanup Concerns

1. How exactly are you going to clean up the site? Why was this particular cleanup method chosen over other options?
2. What process was used (or will be used) to select contractors to perform the cleanup?
3. How will cleanup performance be monitored or evaluated?
4. How much will the cleanup cost?
5. Who will pay for the cleanup?
6. Why not dig up the contamination?
7. Why are you going to just "cap" everything and leave the contamination there?
8. Is dredging safe?
9. Won't dredging just stir up things and contaminate the water even more?
10. How will my quality of life be affected during the cleanup (i.e., noise, traffic, odors, etc.)?
11. After you finish the cleanup, then what? (what happens next?)
12. After the cleanup, will you continue to test to make sure it's still working?



## Superfund Process Questions

1. Do you have enough money to cover the cleanup costs?
2. What if you don't have the funds to finish the job?
3. What if you discover the cleanup is going to cost more than estimated, what happens then?
4. Why aren't you cleaning up the entire site?
5. Why don't you clean up all of the contamination, instead of allowing some to remain?
6. Who determines what levels of contamination are considered safe?
7. Is there someone local residents can talk to if we have questions or concerns?
8. How will you pay?
9. Will my tax dollars be used to address this problem that someone else caused?
10. What is a PRP?
11. Who can we sue?
12. Are our local officials aware?
13. Will we be compensated?
14. What guarantees the cleanup is effective?
15. How will you know when everything is clean?
16. Can you guarantee that all of the contamination will be removed?
17. What if the cleanup doesn't work?
18. What happens if my water (or soil, etc.) is still contaminated after the cleanup?
19. Who's in charge?
20. Who makes the final decision?
21. How/why a Superfund Site?
22. Why does EPA study a site to death? Why don't they just get in there and clean it up?
23. What is the process to come to a solution?
24. Can you guarantee you won't damage our house?
25. Can we get jobs helping with the cleanup?
26. Has an EPA decision ever been reversed?
27. There's another site down the road; can you tell me what's going on there?
28. How does a homeowner know if EPA has investigated pollution problems on their property?
29. Will EPA release specific addresses at which samples have been taken?
30. If we can't eat the fish anymore because of health risks, can you give us a food subsidy?

## Communication Concerns

1. How will you communicate information to me?
2. How will I be informed of what's going on?
3. What happens if you find high concentrations of contaminants near my home—how will I know?
4. Will you share the testing data with residents?
5. Will you let us know if something unexpected happens during the cleanup and things get worse?
6. If a cleanup plan is selected that residents disagree with, is there an appeal process?
7. How will you address public comments?
8. Will you address ALL of the public comments?
9. How do you decide which comments NOT to address?
10. Does a database exist that shows contaminated areas? For example, can I type in an address and find out if there is anything within a 5-mile radius that is being cleaned up or has been cleaned up by EPA or the state?

## Relocation/Buyout Questions

1. Will you relocate me?
2. Will the government buy me out?
3. What is EPA going to do?





4. Why did you let this happen?
5. Will you move me or buy my home?
6. Should I move or relocate?
7. I was told residents might have to relocate during the site cleanup. Who will pay for my moving costs? What about other expenses I may be forced to incur (i.e., costs of transporting my children to school because they won't be able to take the bus, or daily food costs because I won't have access to my stove and refrigerator, etc.)?

### Property Values, Owner Liability, Buying or Selling Property, Takings

1. How will this affect my property value?
2. My property value has decreased because of the site contamination problem. Will I be compensated for this?
3. What can citizens do if their property value goes down because of a polluted (Superfund) site?
4. The site has placed a negative stigma on our community that may affect potential investors, developers, or homeowners; what will be done about this?
5. Will there be an immediate appraisal of my property to adjust my tax status?
6. Do property values rebound? How long will it take? Can you provide examples?
7. Can I be held responsible for pollution on my residential property?
8. If my property sits on a contaminated aquifer, am I liable?
9. As a prospective purchaser of a piece of property that is on or near a Superfund site, what would my responsibility be for contamination that existed at the time of purchase?
10. Is a bank or other lender liable for contamination if it lends money (or has lent money) to owners or developers of contaminated property?
11. What information can EPA provide to potential buyers?
12. Do I have to disclose the contamination on my property to potential buyers?
13. If my loan is denied because of concerns about contamination, can EPA call my bank or appraiser?
14. Will I be able to refinance my loan due to the devaluation of my property?
15. Can I refuse to limit EPA access to my property? If EPA uses my property for sampling or well installation, will I be paid?
16. Can EPA take part or all of my property? How long can they keep me away from my property?
17. Can a homeowner perform a cleanup to ensure that he/she will be able to sell their property?
18. Will this keep our community from developing?
19. If soil is excavated from my yard, will I receive financial assistance to replace plants and shrubbery?

### Challenge Questions

1. Is it the fault of the state or city or another Federal agency?
2. Why have we been ignored?
3. How could this have been avoided?
4. How can you sleep when our children are dying?
5. Why does EPA cover up its actions?
6. Why won't you share all the information?
7. Would you live here?
8. Why are you here?
9. Why did it take you so long to tell us about the contamination?
10. When you first discovered there MIGHT be a problem, why didn't you tell us then?
11. Why can't you clean it up right away?
12. Why should we trust you? How can I trust what you're telling me about the site? How can I trust what you're telling me about my safety?
13. Who's to blame?
14. You would not do this in a white neighborhood, why do it here?



15. Would you live in my house?
16. What are your qualifications for handling this type of cleanup?
17. Do comments from community members really make a difference, or has EPA already made the decision and this is just an exercise they have to go through?
18. I'm concerned that cost will be the driving force behind the agency's selected cleanup option; does community opinion really matter?
19. If the majority of residents disagree with how EPA [or other agency] is planning to clean up the site, will EPA [or other agency] change its mind?
20. Why do you care?
21. Why pays you?
22. Are you being paid off?
23. Do YOU agree with the science?
24. Do you agree with the decision?
25. Are you telling the truth?
26. Is it EPA's official position that we are safe?
27. Why did EPA allow this to happen?
28. Why have you been covering this up for years?
29. Who can give me answers if you can't?
30. Where can I get more information about this site?
31. Did EPA allow the company to operate because you are on the take?

\*This list of frequently asked questions is a modified version of frequently asked questions derived by a workgroup of Community Involvement Coordinators in the U.S. EPA Superfund Program, and questions developed by Vincent T. Covello, Ph.D., Center for Risk Communication, August 2008.

