



Technical Terminology

The terms listed below are found in various places on MCAS Miramar's Installation Restoration Program Community Outreach pages. Some terms that are not present on the web pages have been included for clarification of environmental cleanup processes, regulations, and informational purposes.

Absorption

1) The process by which one substance is taken into the body of another substance. 2) The penetration of molecules or ions of one or more substances (gas, liquid or solid) into the interior of another substance. For example, in hydrated bentonite (a type of clay), the water that is held between the mica-like layers (held within the clay) is the result of absorption.

Action Memo/Removal Action Work Plan (AM/RAW)

Details the selected removal action alternative and explains the rationale for the selection. Also documents responses to public comments and concerns raised during the public comment period. (30 day public comment period)

Administrative Record (AR)

A compilation of information established for all CERCLA sites made available to the public at the start of the Remedial Investigation (RI) for remedial actions, or at the time of Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for removal actions. Information in the Administrative Record supports the selected remedy for remedial actions and removal actions.

Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate Requirement (ARAR)

A federal or state law that must be considered in choosing a remedial action. Remedial actions must be designed, constructed, and operated to comply with all ARARs.

Baseline Risk Assessment

An analysis of the potential adverse health effects (current or future) caused by contaminant releases from a site in the absence of any actions to control or mitigate these releases. According to EPA, the baseline risk assessment can be used to determine whether: 1) A release or threatened release poses an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment that warrants remedial action, and 2) A site presents an imminent and substantial endangerment. The primary purpose is to provide risk managers with an understanding of the actual and potential risks to human health and the environment posed by the site and the uncertainties associated with the assessment.



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Bioremediation	1) Use of living organisms to clean up oil spills or to remove other pollutants from soil, groundwater, or wastewater. 2) Use of organisms, such as non-harmful insects, to remove agricultural pests or counteract diseases of trees, plants, and garden soil.
Bioslurping	A technology application that teams vacuum-assisted free-product recovery with bioventing to simultaneously recover free product and remediate the vadose zone.
Bioventing	The process of aerating vadose zone soils by means of installed vents to stimulate in situ biological activity and optimize biodegradation of organic compounds with some volatilization occurring.
Characterization	Facility or site sampling, monitoring and analysis activities to determine the extent and nature of a release. Characterization provides the basis for acquiring the necessary technical information to develop, screen, analyze, and select appropriate cleanup techniques.
Clean Air Act (CAA)	The CAA was passed in 1970 as amendments to 42 USC 7401, and was amended in 1990. Its purpose is to "protect and enhance the quality of the Nation's air resources." Its primary application is through Prevention of Significant Deterioration permits to regulate new potentially polluting facilities. Of increasing importance are the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPs).
Clean Water Act of 1977 (CWA)	The CWA amended the Federal Water Pollution Control Act first passed in 1956. Its objective is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." The Act's major enforcement tool is the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.
Cleanup	Actions taken to deal with a release or threat of release of a hazardous substance that could affect humans and/or the environment. The term "cleanup" is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms remedial action, removal action, response action, or corrective action.
Cleanup Level	The residual concentration of a hazardous substance in a medium that is determined to be protective of human health and the environment under specified exposure conditions.



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Cleanup Technology	A technology that is the whole or part of a treatment train to cleanup hazardous waste sites.
Closeout	Conducted when DON considers no further response actions under the IR Program to be appropriate for the site and when site cleanup confirms that no significant threat to public health or the environment exists. The Navy forwards closeout documentation to the regulators for concurrence.
Closure	The regulatory process of deactivating, stabilizing and or decontaminating waste management units or facilities under RCRA.
Closure Plan	Documentation prepared to guide the deactivation, stabilization and surveillance of a waste management unit or facility under RCRA.
Coastal Zone	As defined by the NCP, all US waters subject to the tide, US waters of the Great Lakes, specified ports and harbors on inland rivers, waters of the contiguous zone, other waters of the high seas subject to the NCP, and the land surface or land substrata, groundwaters, and ambient air proximal to those waters. The term coastal zone delineates an area of federal responsibility for response action. Precise boundaries are determined by EPA/USCG agreements and identified in federal regional contingency plans.
Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act of 1992 (CERFA)	This law amends CERCLA and requires that the federal government identify real property which is not contaminated, and that offers the greatest opportunity for expedited reuse and redevelopment by the community on each facility. The identified parcels of real property must be either free from hazardous substances and petroleum products, including aviation fuel and motor oil, and their derivatives, or the remediation of contamination by those substances should be expedited to facilitate transfer to the public.



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Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)

The Federal statute enacted in 1980 and amended in 1986 by the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act (SARA) that establishes a comprehensive, statutory framework for identifying, investigating, and cleaning up releases of hazardous substances to the environment. CERCLA authorizes the President to take response actions when a release or the threat of a release is discovered. Through Executive Order 12580, signed in January 1987, the President directs the Secretary of Defense to implement investigation and cleanup measures in consultation with EPA for releases of hazardous substances from facilities under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

Contaminant

1) Any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter that has an adverse affect on air, water, or soil. 2) As defined by section 101(33) of CERCLA, shall include but not be limited to, any element, substance, compound or mixture, including disease-causing agents, which after release into the environment and upon exposure, ingestion, inhalation, or assimilation into any organism, either directly from the environment or indirectly by ingestion through food chains, will or may reasonably be anticipated to cause death, disease, behavioral abnormalities, cancer, genetic mutation, physiological malfunctions (including malfunctions in reproduction) or physical deformations, in such organisms or their offspring. Shall not include petroleum, including crude oil or any fraction thereof which is not otherwise specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance and shall not include natural gas, liquefied natural gas or synthetic gas of pipeline quality (or mixtures of natural gas and such synthetic gas). 3) For purposes of the NCP, the term pollutant or contaminant means any pollutant or contaminant that may present an imminent and substantial danger to public health or welfare.

Contamination

Introduction into water, air and/or soil of microorganisms, chemicals, toxic substances, wastes, or wastewater in a concentration that makes the medium unfit for its next intended use. Also applies to surfaces of objects and buildings, and various household and agricultural use products.

Decontamination

Removal of harmful substances from exposed individuals, rooms and furnishings in buildings, or the exterior environment.



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Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP)

Formally established by Congress in 10 USC 2701-2707 and 2810; provides centralized management for the cleanup of DOD hazardous waste sites consistent with the provisions of CERCLA as amended by SARA, the NCP, and E.O. 12580.

Disposal

Final placement or destruction of toxic, radioactive, or other wastes; surplus or banned pesticides or other chemicals; polluted soils; and drums containing hazardous materials from removal actions or accidental releases. Disposal may be accomplished through use of approved secure landfills, surface impoundments, land farming, deep-well injection, ocean dumping, or incineration.

Ecological Risk

A qualitative or quantitative estimate of the potential impact on local plants and animals of exposure to chemicals detected in the environment.

Endangerment Assessment

A study to determine the nature and extent of contamination at a site on the National Priorities List and the risks posed to public health or the environment. EPA or the state conducts the study when a legal action is to be taken to direct potentially responsible parties to clean up a site or pay for it. An endangerment assessment supplements a remedial investigation.

Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA)

Develops and evaluates potential cleanup alternatives and compares costs associated with each alternative. The EE/CA usually also recommends the most favorable alternative. (30 day public comment period)

Environment

1) As defined by section 101(8) of CERCLA, includes the navigable waters, the waters of the contiguous zone, and the ocean waters of which the natural resources are under the exclusive management authority of the U.S., and any other surface water, groundwater, drinking water supply, land surface or subsurface strata, ambient air, or fish, wildlife or biota within the U.S. or under jurisdiction of the U.S. 2) The sum of all external conditions affecting the life, development and survival of an organism.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

An environmental analysis prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to determine whether a federal action would significantly affect the environment and thus require a more detailed environmental impact statement.



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Environmental Contamination	The release of hazardous substances, or the potential release of a discarded hazardous substance, in a quantity which is, or may become, injurious to the environment, or the public health, safety or welfare.
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	A document required of federal agencies by the National Environmental Policy Act for major projects or legislative proposals significantly affecting the environment. A tool for decision making, it describes the positive and negative effects of the undertaking and cites alternative actions.
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Established in 1970 by Presidential Executive Order, bringing together parts of various government agencies involved with control of pollution.
Environmental Restoration (ER)	Cleanup and restoration of sites contaminated with hazardous substances during past production or disposal activities.
Environmental Restoration, Navy (ER,N)	The Navy established support funds for oversight of the IR Program. These support funds are intended to assist Installations in meeting oversight requirements. Replaced DERA Funding.
Environmental Risk	The potential or likelihood of injury, disease, or death resulting from human exposure to a potential environmental threat.
Ex Situ	Refers to a technology or process for which contaminated material must be removed from the site of contamination for treatment. For example, soil must be excavated or groundwater must be pumped to an above ground treatment system. Antonym - In Situ.
Facility	As defined by CERCLA, any building, structure, installation, pipe or pipeline, well, pit, pond, lagoon, impoundment, ditch, landfill, storage container, motor vehicle, rolling stock, or aircraft; or any site or area where hazardous substances have been deposited, stored, disposed of, placed, or otherwise come to be located.
Feasibility Study (FS)	Develops and evaluates potential cleanup alternatives for a particular site. The FS also usually recommends the selection of the most favorable alternative.



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Final Action (FA)	Those removal actions that achieve the final cleanup objectives, considering long-term effectiveness and permanence, for the particular site, media, or operable unit. Except for O & M and possibly a five-year review, final actions require no additional study or action after the final actions are complete.
Ground Monitoring Well	Wells designed to monitor and assess natural and man-made impacts to ground water resources.
Groundwater (GW)	The supply of fresh water found beneath the Earth's surface in the interstices between soil grains, in fractures, or in porous formations. Because groundwater is a major source of drinking water, there is growing concern over contamination from leaching agricultural or industrial pollutants or leaking underground storage tanks.
Groundwater Remediation	Treatment of groundwater to remove pollutants.
Hazardous Waste (HW)	1) A solid waste or combination of solid wastes which because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics may: A) Cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or to a serious, irreversible, or incapacitating reversible illness; or B) Pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of or otherwise managed. Hazardous wastes may be <i>listed</i> (named on a list within a regulation) or <i>characteristic</i> (exhibits one of the four characteristics: corrosive, toxic, ignitable or reactive). 2) By-products of society that can pose a substantial or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed.
Health Assessment	An evaluation of available data on existing or potential risks to human health posed by a Superfund site. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is required to perform such an assessment at every site on the National Priorities List.
Health Hazard	A chemical, mixture of chemicals or a pathogen for which there is statistically significant evidence, Based on at least one study conducted in accordance with established scientific principles, that acute or chronic effects may occur in exposed personnel.



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Human Health Risk	A qualitative or quantitative estimate of the potential impact on the human population of exposure to chemicals detected in the environment.
In Situ Remediation	A treatment process that can be operated within the site of contamination without bulk excavation. <i>Antonym - Ex Situ.</i>
Indigenous	1) Living or occurring naturally in a specific area or environment, native. 2) For bioremediation, microorganisms already living at a site.
Initial Site Characterization (ISC)	Completed after discovery of a release from an Underground Storage Tank (UST) and after any initial abatement measures and the site check have been completed. The ISC should assemble information into a report on the site such as the nature and estimated quantity of release; surrounding populations; water quality, use and well locations; storm water/wastewater systems; climatology; land use; results of the site check and initial abatement measures; and results of any free product removals. Equivalent to a CERCLA Preliminary Assessment (PA).
Innovative Treatment Technologies	Newly invented processes that have been tested and used as treatments for hazardous waste or other contaminated materials, but still lack enough information about their cost and how well they work to predict their performance under a variety of operating conditions. They are often used because they can offer cost-effective, long-term solutions to cleanup problems, they may provide an alternative to land disposal or incineration, and are often more acceptable to surrounding communities than some established treatment technologies.
Installation	The real property owned, formerly owned, or leased by the Navy, including a main Air Station and any associated contiguous real properties identified by the same real property number.
Installation Restoration Program (IR, IRP)	Established in 1984 to help identify, investigate, and cleanup contamination on DOD properties; conducted under the auspices of CERCLA of 1980 and SARA of 1986; the DOD equivalent to the EPA Superfund program.



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Land Use Controls	A physical barrier or legal restriction that is imposed on a property to eliminate or limit the exposure of people and plants and animals to contaminated soil.
Leachate	Water that collects contaminants as it trickles through wastes, pesticides or fertilizers. Leaching may occur in farming areas, feedlots, and landfills, and may result in hazardous substances entering surface water, groundwater, or soil.
Long-Term Monitoring (LTM)	Sometimes needed (especially in the case of groundwater contamination) to ensure that a site no longer poses a long-term hazard to human health or the environment. Monitoring may be done quarterly to annually and may last for years or even decades.
National Priority List (NPL)	CERCLA established the National Priorities List (NPL) to guide the US EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation.
Natural Resource	As defined by CERCLA, land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater, drinking water supplies, and other such resources belonging to, managed by, held in trust by, appertaining to, or otherwise controlled by the U.S., including the resources of the fishery conservation/zone established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, any State or local government, any foreign government, any Indian Tribe, or, if such resources are subject to a trust restriction on alienation, any member of an Indian Tribe.
No Further Response Action Planned (NFRAP)	A site that does not pose (or no longer poses) a significant threat to public health or the environment; the decision must be documented and may be reversible if future information reveals additional remedial action is warranted.
On-Site	According to the NCP, the aerial extent of contamination and all suitable areas in very close proximity to the contamination necessary for implementation of the response action.
On-Site Facility	A hazardous waste treatment, storage or disposal area that is located on the generating site.



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Operable Unit (OU)	A group of one or more cleanup sites. Often the sites within the operable unit have similar characteristics, such as contaminants, industrial processes, or location.
Preliminary Assessment (PA)	This step of the IR process determines what areas of an installation have the potential for environmental contamination. Existing historical records, past procedures and aerial photographs are reviewed, and current and former Air Station personnel are interviewed. A list is prepared with individual sites and recommendations for either more detailed inspections or no further action.
Preliminary Remediation Goals (PRGs)	Concentration levels set for individual chemicals that, for carcinogens corresponds to a specific cancer risk level of 1 in 1 million and for noncarcinogens corresponds to a Hazard Quotient of 1. PRGs are generally selected when ARARs are not available.
Prevention	Measures taken to minimize the release of wastes to the environment.
Proposed Plan (PP)	The plan for a site cleanup, normally based on recommendations from the feasibility study, and available to the public for comment (30 day public comment period).
Public	As defined by the NCP includes citizens directly affected by a site, other interested citizens or parties, organized groups, elected officials, and potentially responsible parties.
Public Hearing	A formal meeting wherein officials hear the public's views and concerns about an action or proposal. The Navy is required to consider such comments when evaluating its actions. Public hearings must be held upon request during the public comment period.
Public Notice	1) Notification by EPA informing the public of Agency actions such as the issuance of a draft permit or scheduling of a hearing. EPA is required to ensure proper public notice, including publication in newspapers and broadcast over radio stations. 2) In the safe drinking water program, water suppliers are required to publish and broadcast notices when pollution problems are discovered.



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Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)	A written document associated with all remedial site sampling activities, which presents in specific terms the organization (where applicable), objectives, functional activities, and specific Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC) activities designed to achieve the Data Quality Objectives (DQO) of a specific project(s) or continuing operation(s). The QAPP is prepared for each specific project or continuing operation (or group of similar projects or continuing operations). The QAPP will be prepared by the responsible program office, regional office, laboratory, contractor, recipient of an assistance agreement, or other organization. For an enforcement action, potentially responsible parties may prepare a QAPP subject to lead agency approval. There are 16 essential elements which EPA has mandated to be addressed in a project plan.
Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)	A system of procedures, checks, audits, and corrective actions to ensure that all research design and performance, environmental monitoring and sampling, and other technical and reporting activities are of the highest achievable quality.
RCRA Facility Assessment (RFA)	The initial process to determine whether corrective action at a site is warranted or to define what additional data must be gathered to make this determination. Equivalent to a CERCLA Preliminary Assessment (PA). RFAs are performed as part of the RCRA permitting process.
Record of Decision (ROD)	The documentation of the final remedial response action decision for site cleanup. The ROD is based on information and technical analysis generated during the remedial investigation/feasibility study and consideration of public comments and community concerns.
Record of Decision (ROD)	A public document that explains which cleanup alternatives will be used at NPL sites. The ROD is based on information and technical analysis generated during the remedial investigation/feasibility study and consideration of public comments and community concerns.
Remedial Action (RA)	Involves the construction, operation, and implementation of the final cleanup remedy until confirmatory sampling and analysis indicate that cleanup goals have been reached.



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Remedial Action Objectives (RAO)	Describes what the site cleanup is expected to accomplish.
Remedial Action Process	Used as the standard method of environmental remediation at CERCLA sites.
Remedial Design (RD)	Involves the development of the actual design of the selected cleanup remedy including preparation of all technical drawings, plans and specifications needed to implement the cleanup action.
Remedial Investigation (RI)	Characterizes the nature and extent of contamination at a hazardous waste site and estimates risks to human health and the environment posed by contaminants at the site. Depending on the nature of contamination, the RI will recommend either a Remedial Action or a Removal Action.
Remedial Project Manager (RPM)	Primary point of contact involved in the cleanup of IR sites. RPMs are responsible for taking all response actions to address the release of contaminants. The RPM is the prime contact for remedial actions being taken at sites on the NPL, and for sites not on the NPL but under the jurisdiction of a Federal agency. The RPM coordinates, directs, and reviews the work of other agencies, responsible parties, and contractors to ensure compliance with appropriate regulatory requirements.
Remedial Response	Long-term action that stops or substantially reduces a release or threat of a release of hazardous substances that is serious but not an immediate threat to public health.
Remediation	Cleanup or other methods used to remove or contain a toxic spill or hazardous materials from a Superfund site.
Remediation Goal (RG)	The acceptable level of a chemical to protect human health and ecological receptors.
Remedy in Place (RIP)	Indicates that a final remedial action has been constructed, implemented and is operating according to the Remedial Design (RD). An example of this would be a pump and treat system that is installed, operating as designed, and will continue to operate until cleanup levels have been attained. Since operation is on-going, the site cannot be considered as Response Complete (RC).



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Removal Action (RVL)	Involves the construction, operation, and implementation of the final cleanup remedy until confirmatory sampling and analysis indicate that cleanup goals have been reached.
Removal Action Process (non-time critical)	Used when an expedited cleanup is determined to be in the best interests of the government and surrounding community.
Removal Site Evaluation (RSE)	An optional site evaluation step to collect additional data for the purpose of removal action planning.
Resident, Officer in Charge of Construction (ROICC)	Manages implementation of IR contracts involving construction including removal and remedial actions. Ensures that the contractor meets all specifications and activities are completed in a manner that protects human health, welfare, and the environment.
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)	RCRA, as amended by the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984 (HSWA), requires the establishment of a management system for hazardous waste (Subtitle C), non-hazardous solid waste (Subtitle D), and underground storage tanks (Subtitle I). RCRA also provides corrective action authority for cleanup of pre-RCRA hazardous waste management units and non-hazardous solid waste management units.
Restoration Advisory Board (RAB)	An advisory group for the restoration process with members from the public, the Navy, and the regulatory agencies. The purpose of the RAB is to gain effective input from stakeholders on cleanup activities and increase installation responsiveness to the community's environmental restoration concerns.
Risk Assessment	1) Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the risk posed to human health and/or the environment by the actual or potential presence and/or use of specific pollutants. 2) The process used to determine the threats posed by hazardous substances. Elements include: identification of the hazardous substances present in the environmental media; assessment of exposure and exposure pathways; assessment of the toxicity of the site's hazardous substances; characterization of human health risks; and characterization of the impacts and/or risks to the environment.



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Risk Management

The process of evaluating and selecting alternative regulatory and non-regulatory responses to risk. The selection process necessarily requires the consideration of site-specific scientific, legal, economic, social, political, and behavioral factors.

Site

1) A single unit where hazardous substances have been deposited, stored, disposed of, or placed. An NPL site is also defined as consisting of all contaminated areas within the area used to define the site, and any other location to or from which contamination from that area has come to be located. The NPL site would include all releases evaluated as part of the HRS analysis. 2) As defined by the Relative Risk Site Evaluation Primer, a site is a discrete area where suspected contamination has been verified, requiring further response action. A site by definition has been, or will be, entered into the Navy Restoration Management Information System (RMIS).

Site Closeout (SC)

The final step for IR sites. SC is reached when no further response actions under the IRP are appropriate or anticipated and the regulatory agencies concur. For NPL sites, this step will include following the proper procedure for deletion from the NPL according to the NCP (40 CFR 300.425). Actual SC is the date that the deletion appears in the Federal Register. It is only under unusual circumstances that a site that has been closed out will be reopened.

Site Inspection (SI)

The initial physical inspection of a site that may include limited soil and water sampling. The SI is used to determine whether a site actually contains contamination. If no significant contamination is found, the site is recommended for No Further Response Action Planned. Otherwise, the site is recommended for a Remedial Investigation. Occasionally, contamination found during an SI may warrant a removal action without the next step of Remedial Investigation (RI).

Soil

A mixture of organic and inorganic solids, air, water, and biota which exists on the earth surface above bedrock, including materials of anthropogenic sources, such as slag, sludge, etc.



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Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU)

Any discernible unit in which wastes have been placed at any time, regardless of whether the unit was designed to accept solid waste or hazardous waste and from which contaminants may migrate; units to include but not be limited to old landfills, wastewater treatment tanks, container storage areas, surface impoundments, waste piles, land treatment units, incinerators, injection wells, recycling operations, leaking process or waste collection sewers, and transfer stations. SWMUs include any area at a facility at which solid wastes have been routinely and systematically released. Only past releases from SWMUs that also meet the definition of a CERCLA release are eligible for remediation through the IR Program.

Superfund

The program operated under the legislative authority of CERCLA and SARA that funds and carries out EPA solid waste emergency and long-term removal and remedial activities. These activities include establishing the National Priorities List, investigating sites for inclusion on the list, determining their priority, and conducting and/or supervising the cleanup and other remedial actions.

Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA)

In addition to certain free-standing provisions of law, it includes amendments to CERCLA, the Solid Waste Disposal Act, and the Internal Revenue Code. Among the free-standing provisions of law is Title III of SARA, also known as the "Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986," and Title IV of SARA, also known as the "Radon Gas Indoor Air Quality Research Act of 1986." Title V of SARA amending the Internal Revenue Code is also known as the "Superfund Revenue Act of 1986."



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Technical Review Committee (TRC)

A group of technically cognizant individuals responsible for reviewing technical reports and data for a site. This assemblage should be established after a release or threat of a release has been confirmed at an installation, normally at the end of a Preliminary Assessment or Site Investigation. A TRC shall be established at all installations, whether NPL or non-NPL for the purpose of reviewing and commenting on actions and proposed actions concerning releases or threatened releases at the installation. The TRC shall consist of (but not be limited to) at least one representative from the installation and cognizant Engineering Field Division (EFD), EPA, appropriate state and local authorities, and a public representative of the community involved. It should be noted that the TRC is not an advisory group nor a decision-making body. DON policy is to convert all TRCs to Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs).

Underground Storage Tank (UST)

All tanks and attached piping containing regulated substances in which 10% or more of the tank volume (including piping) is beneath the surface of the ground.

Vadose (Unsaturated) Zone

The zone of geologic material that occurs above the water table and capillary fringe, in which the pores are only partially filled with water (soil moisture is less than porosity), and the fluid pressure is less than atmospheric.