

# Washington's Formal Cleanup Process

Washington State Department of Ecology

The following cleanup steps occur in this order through the process:

## Discovery

- Report potential contamination to Ecology. The public can report a spill or an environmental issue via phone or online.

## Initial Investigation

- Determine if contamination requires further action.

## Site Hazard Assessment

- Evaluate potential risk to human health and the environment based on exposure potential and severity of hazard.

## Remedial Investigation

- Determine the nature and extent of contamination through scientific testing and analysis.
- Determine potential impacts to human health and the environment.
- The public has an opportunity to comment on the Remedial Investigation.

## Feasibility Study

- Identify methods to eliminate exposure to contamination on the site.
- Assemble methods into a range of cleanup alternatives.
- Use an environmental benefit vs. cost analysis to choose a preferred alternative. This analysis is about finding a balance between cost and benefit.
- The public has an opportunity to comment on the Feasibility Study.

The results of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study steps are often reported together.

## Cleanup Action Plan

- Describe Ecology's selected cleanup action, including:
  - Cleanup standards to protect human health and the environment.
  - Schedule of next steps.
  - Requirements for monitoring, operation, and maintenance.
- The public has an opportunity to comment on the Cleanup Action Plan.

## Engineering Design

- Create detailed design and construction documents for the cleanup action.

## Clean up the site!

- Complete the cleanup action. Examples of cleanup actions include “construction” projects such as:
  - Constructing a protective multi-layered capping system.
  - Treating contamination in place.
  - Removing contamination to a hazardous waste landfill.

## Monitoring and Site Use Controls

- Monitor and do on-going operations/maintenance.
- Restrict or prohibit activities that could disturb the cleanup.

The “Monitoring and Site Use Controls” step in overall cleanup process can continue indefinitely into the future.

## Reviews and De-listing

- Hold 5-year periodic reviews to ensure cleanup meets standards.
- Remove site from Hazardous Sites List after it meets all cleanup standards and requirements.
- The public has an opportunity to comment on reviews and delistings.

### “Reviews and De-listing” step in overall cleanup process

During required on-going monitoring and operations/ maintenance, Ecology conducts periodic reviews. Depending on these reviews, Ecology may remove the cleanup site from the Hazardous Sites List.

Cleanup actions completed under this process address contamination and protect human health and the environment.

## The following cleanup steps occur throughout the process:

### Legal Agreements

- Define cleanup steps required after the Site Hazard Assessment step. All the parties responsible for the cleanup sign these legal agreements.

### Interim Actions

- Partially address contamination.
- May occur any time.
- Like the final cleanup action, an interim action is a “construction” project.

## Public Participation

- Encourage community feedback throughout cleanup process.
- Hold public comment periods at key times.

## Washington's Cleanup Law: The Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA)

MTCA defines the cleanup process. This public-initiated environmental law directs upland cleanups (on land or in groundwater) and sediment cleanups (in freshwater or marine environments). Ecology enacts MTCA and regulates the cleanup process.

## Ecology Publication

- September 2019
- Publication number 19-09-166