

## **Superfund Site Assessment (Pre-Remedial Program)**

The Superfund Program is administered under CERCLA as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1991. The purpose of the program is to assess and cleanup sites of federal interest to uses desired by the surrounding community in a manner protective of human health and the environment. EPA is authorized to use a trust fund to pay for this work and to pursue recovery of EPA expenditures from parties potentially responsible for the contamination.

By law, the Superfund program cannot currently be delegated to the states. Rhode Island, under state law, administers its own assessments and cleanup program at contaminated sites of state interest. In addition, states provide assistance to EPA to cleanup high priority sites on the National Priority List (NPL) and to undertake site assessments for sites not yet on the NPL. As part of the EPA-New England initiative, the region is working jointly with states to develop their voluntary cleanup programs.

There are currently 200 sites in Rhode Island that are suspected hazardous waste disposal sites and are listed on the federal inventory known as CERCLA. Additional sites continue to be added as warranted. Approximately ten sites per year are investigated and evaluated under this program.

This Superfund Pre-Remedial program is currently the only avenue by which a possible hazardous waste site can undergo a comprehensive investigation by an independent authority (the State funded hazardous waste site investigation program relies predominantly on responsible parties to conduct investigations). Although the initial listing of sites on the federal inventory is based on a suspicion of disposal activities, property owners and representatives from industries have repeatedly expressed concern that this listing creates a stigma on the title to the property that makes financing and further development virtually impossible.

The Superfund Pre-Remedial program provides management assistance for assessments performed by USEPA's contractor, management of the State abandoned site program and also conduct investigations for sites listed on the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), as amended, commonly referred to as Superfund. Assessments conducted by USEPA's contractor or by RIDEM are submitted to USEPA for review and approval and include Site Discovery (SD), Preliminary Assessments (PA), Site Inspection (SI), Site Reassessments (SR) and Expanded Site Inspections (ESI).

Site Investigations that are performed by RIDEM personnel are conducted in accordance with a Multi Site Cooperative Agreement between RIDEM and USEPA, and technical specifications provided by USEPA. Fieldwork is performed by RIDEM personnel, the Department's Field Investigation and Remediation Support Team (FIRST) or through the Technical Assistance Contract (TAC),

The Office has adopted the internal position that these property owners and industry representatives will be given the opportunity to take good faith actions under the State program to avoid inclusion on the federal inventory. Sites where the private parties are unwilling or unable to conduct the necessary investigations and clean-ups will be referred to this program.

### **Program Purpose**

To conduct an increasingly complex series of evaluations of federally-listed suspected hazardous waste sites in order to determine if those sites pose sufficient threats to human health and the environment to be listed on the National Priorities List and become eligible for federally funded investigation and clean-up under Superfund.

### **Program Objectives**

- To recommend listing of suspected hazardous waste disposal sites on the federal inventory, CERCLA, when the Department has determined that the responsible parties are unwilling or unable to sufficiently investigate and clean-up the site under the State program;
- To conduct, or evaluate, preliminary assessments of suspected hazardous waste disposal sites to determine if further action is warranted under the program;
- To conduct, or evaluate, site investigations of suspected hazardous waste disposal sites, including determining actual and potential impacts from those sites, to judge whether further action is warranted under the program;
- To conduct, or evaluate, numerical evaluations and rankings of sites using the federal Hazard Ranking System to determine if those sites should be listed on the National Priorities List and become eligible for further investigation and clean-up under Superfund; and
- To effectively track and report the level of effort expended completing tasks under this program for compliance with grant conditions and effective program management.