



Cleanup Site

## Radioactively Contaminated Sites

If radioactive materials are used or disposed of improperly, they can contaminate buildings and the environment. Every site requiring cleanup is different depending on the type of facility, the radioactive elements involved and the concentration of the radioactive elements.

- Superfund is the federal government program that identifies and cleans up the worst hazardous substance release sites.

### About Radioactively Contaminated Sites

From the type of facility to the type of radiation, every radioactively contaminated cleanup site is different. Contaminated sites can be abandoned or still operating. Sites that have radioactive contamination may be a small corner of a laboratory or an abandoned nuclear weapons plant from the Cold War era. Depending on the type of facility and the type of radiation, contamination could be found in air, liquids, equipment or soil. Once discovered, these sites are closely monitored to protect people from exposure to radiation.

EPA's Superfund<sup>i</sup> program cleans up some radioactively contaminated sites. When working to clean up radioactive contamination at Superfund sites, responders communicate with the people living around the site about the hazards and involve the community in planning the cleanup. When the cleanup plan is complete, EPA reviews the plan to make sure it protects both people and the environment. At certain sites, some of the contamination must be removed immediately. EPA works with law enforcement to make sure that those responsible for the contamination at a cleanup site are held accountable.



Burial grounds for low-level radioactive waste on the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee.

## Rules and Guidance

### U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA), SUPERFUND

Superfund is the federal government program that identifies and cleans up the worst hazardous substance release sites. Superfund maintains a National Priorities List<sup>ii</sup> of sites in the United States that are contaminated with chemicals and radioactive materials.

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD), DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (DERP) AND FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)

DERP was set up in 1984 to oversee the cleanup of contamination at DoD properties. The program includes the Installation Restoration Program (IRP), which identifies contamination at property DOD owns or used to own. DoD is also responsible for environmental restoration of sites that were once used by the United States government, sites referred to as Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS).

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) AND U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (USACE), FORMERLY UTILIZED SITES REMEDIAL ACTION PROGRAM (FUSRAP)

The FUSRAP program was started in 1974 by the DOE. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took it over in 1997. FUSRAP identifies and assesses non-government radioactive sites that were part of the Nation's early atomic energy and weapons program. If necessary, the program protects the public from exposure to the radiation by cleaning up a site to meet today's standards or control the site to prevent anyone from entering.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE), URANIUM MILL TAILINGS REMEDIAL ACTION PROGRAM (UMTRAP)

DOE has the authority to clean up uranium processing sites that were out of business as of 1978. The goal is to keep uranium mill tailing piles and other radioactive wastes from contaminating the environment.



Contaminated soil being loaded into a truck with a former plutonium production reactor in the background.

## U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (NRC)

When facilities apply for a license to use radioactive materials, they must agree to clean up the facility before they go out of business and stop using materials. Nuclear Regulatory Commission or state inspectors must agree that the facility cleanup is adequate before they will agree to end oversight and release it for public or restricted use.

## What you can do

**Be Informed:** Learn about local cleanup activities. Knowing where radioactively contaminated sites are helps you avoid them and reduce your risk of exposure. You can find out if there are Superfund sites in your community by checking the Superfund site map<sup>iii</sup>.

**Respect Safety Zones:** Often, safety zones are set up around contaminated sites. These zones keep people away from hazardous materials. Only trained professionals who understand the hazard and appropriate safety procedures should be inside the safety zones.

## Where to learn more

You can learn more about radioactively contaminated sites by visiting the resources available on the following webpage: <http://www3.epa.gov/radtown/contaminated-sites.html#learn-more>.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www2.epa.gov/superfund/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www2.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/index.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www2.epa.gov/superfund/sites/index.htm>