

Appendix K—103 Most Frequently Asked Questions at Environmental Cleanup and Hazardous Waste Sites

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Health Risk Concerns

1. Am I at risk from the contamination?
2. What are the risks to my children?
3. What are the risks to my pets?
4. What are the impacts to natural habitat (i.e., fish and other species)?
5. Can my children and pets play in the soil?
6. What health effects can I expect to see if I've been exposed to site contaminants?
7. What are the short-term effects?
8. What are the long-term effects?
9. I have a recent health problem (i.e., headaches, rashes, etc.) that I never had before; could the site contamination have caused this problem?
10. Have any health problems been reported so far?
11. How many people have become ill as a result of the site?
12. Are you going to test residents for exposure?
13. Can you set up a temporary, local health center or clinic where we can be tested?
14. I'm pregnant (or planning to be). Will the contaminants affect my unborn child?
15. Is it safe to garden in my yard?
16. Is it safe to eat vegetables grown in my garden?
17. Is it safe to drink the water?
18. Will you provide us with bottled water?
19. Is it safe to bathe or shower in the water?
20. Is it safe to water our lawns with the potentially contaminated water?
21. Is it safe to mow our lawns if the soil underneath is potentially contaminated?
22. Is it safe to use the river for fishing and other recreational purposes?
23. Is it safe to eat the fish?
24. What's being done right now to protect mine and my family's health?
25. Will capping the site protect my health?
26. How serious is the contamination?
27. What happens if my ventilation system shuts down?
28. Can I get sick from breathing the air?

Investigation/Data Concerns

1. Where did the contamination come from?
2. How bad is the problem?
3. How much contamination is there?
4. Is the contamination moving, and if so, in what direction?
5. Are there any other contaminants beside the ones we were told about?
6. How can you be sure there are no other contaminants?
7. Will you conduct testing/sampling to make sure the soil in my yard is free of contaminants?
8. How will you decide where to sample and where not to sample?
9. Who determines what levels of contamination are considered “safe”?
10. Why don’t you clean up all of the contamination, instead of allowing some to remain?
11. How do you know whether my drinking water is contaminated?
12. How do you know whether my yard has contaminated soil?
13. How do you know that it’s safe to breathe the air?
14. How do you know whether it’s safe to go fishing?
15. Why hasn’t my well been sampled?
16. Why have some people received bottled water and not others?
17. Can I see the results of the testing you’ve done on my property?
18. Can I see the results of testing you’ve done on other properties in the neighborhood?
19. Do I have to give you access to sample my property?
20. What if I refuse access to my property?
21. Do I need to be home and take time off work while you’re sampling my property?
22. I’m moving into the area; can I see the results of sampling that’s been done?
23. Who will be doing the sampling?
24. How can we be sure the sampling data is accurate?
25. How can we be sure that future sampling won’t find things that you didn’t find now?
26. Can you guarantee the accuracy of sampling results?

Cleanup Concerns

1. How exactly are you going to clean up the site?
2. Why was this particular cleanup method chosen over other options?
3. How long will the cleanup take?
4. When are you going to start the cleanup?

Cleanup Concerns (cont.)

5. Who is going to perform the cleanup?
6. What process was used (or will be used) to select contractors to perform the cleanup?
7. How will cleanup performance be monitored or evaluated?
8. How much will the cleanup cost?
9. Who will pay for the cleanup?
10. Will my tax dollars have to pay to address this problem that someone else caused?
11. Can taxpayers be reimbursed?
12. How will you know when everything is “clean”?
13. Why are you going to just “cap” everything and leave the contamination there?
14. Why not dig up the contamination?
15. Is dredging safe?
16. Won't dredging just ‘stir up’ things and contaminate the water even more?
17. What if the cleanup doesn't work?
18. Can you guarantee that all of the contamination will be removed?
19. How will my quality of life be affected during the cleanup? (i.e., noise, traffic, odors, etc.)?
20. After you finish the cleanup, then what? (what happens next?)
21. After the cleanup, will you continue to test to make sure it's still working?
22. What happens if my water (or soil, etc.) is still contaminated after the cleanup?

Communication Concerns

1. Why did it take you so long to tell us about the contamination?
2. How can I trust what you're telling me about the site?
3. How can I trust what you're telling me about my safety?
4. What happens if you find high concentrations of contaminants near my home—how will I know?
5. How will I be informed of what's going on?
6. Will you share the testing data with residents?
7. Will you let us know if something unexpected happens during the cleanup and things get worse?
8. Is there someone local residents can talk to if we have questions or concerns?
9. Where can I get more information about this site?
10. Where can I get more information about similar sites that have already been cleaned up?

Communication Concerns (cont.)

11. If a cleanup plan is selected that residents disagree with, is there an appeal process?
12. How will you address public comments?
13. Will you address ALL of the public comments?
14. How do you decide which comments NOT to address?
15. 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?
16. There's another site down the road; can you tell me what's going on there?
17. When you first discovered there MIGHT be a problem, why didn't you tell us then?

Economic Concerns

1. If soil is excavated from my yard, will I receive financial assistance to replace plants and shrubbery?
2. My property value has decreased because of the site contamination problem. Will I be compensated for this?
3. I'm concerned that cost will be the driving force behind the agency's selected cleanup option; does community opinion really matter?
4. 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.)
5. The site has placed a "negative stigma" on our community that may affect potential investors, developers, or homeowners; what will be done about this?
6. Will this keep our community from developing?
7. Can we get jobs helping with the cleanup?
8. If we can't eat the fish anymore because of health risks, can you give us a food subsidy?
9. Do you have enough money to cover the cleanup costs?
10. What if you discover the cleanup is going to cost more than estimated, what happens then?