



## Radioactive Contamination at Clean-Up Sites

Over 1,000 United States locations, including both operational and abandoned sites, are contaminated with radiation. These sites range in size from small corners in laboratories to massive nuclear weapons facilities. The contamination may be found in the air, water, and soil, as well as equipment and buildings. These sites are closely monitored to prevent unnecessary exposure of the public.

From the location to the type of radiation, every clean-up site is different. The vast majority of sites pose hazards only to the people using them. Radiation levels in the air, water, and soil around these sites are closely monitored. In cases of accidental spills or releases of radioactive materials, clean-up response teams use modern technologies to assess the situation and take appropriate actions to limit potential hazards to people and the environment.

### Who is protecting you

For many contaminated sites, clean-up programs have already been established. The following is an overview of the major clean-up programs in the United States.

#### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

##### Superfund Program

Superfund, the Federal government's program to identify uncontrolled hazardous waste sites, tests the conditions of the sites, formulates clean-up plans, and cleans up the sites. Under the Superfund program, abandoned, accidentally spilled, or illegally dumped hazardous wastes that pose a current or future threat to human health or the environment are cleaned up so the sites are safe to use for other purposes.

Superfund maintains the National Priority List of chemically and radiologically contaminated sites in the United States. You can find a listing of the long-term remedial sites at <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/npl.htm>.

#### U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)

##### Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP)

DERP was established in 1984 to promote and coordinate evaluation and clean-up of contamination at DoD installations. The program includes the Installation Restoration Program (IRP), which identifies, investigates, and restores potential contamination at DoD installations and former properties. Sites that pose the greatest potential public health and environmental hazards are given highest priority.

## U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

### Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP)

The FUSRAP program was initiated in 1974 by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the predecessor of the U.S. DOE. The purpose of this program is to identify and evaluate sites that were previously used by the AEC or its predecessor, the Manhattan Engineering District (MED). If necessary, the program decontaminates the sites to meet current standards, or controls the site to ensure the public is protected from unnecessary exposure. You can find a listing of FUSRAP sites at <http://hq.environmental.usace.army.mil/programs/fusrap/fusrap.html>.

DOE also works with EPA's Superfund program to clean up DOE facilities.

## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

### Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program

USACE assumed primary responsibility from DOE in 1997 to manage the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, which addresses radioactive contamination at sites used or owned by DOE (including DOE predecessor agencies) and DoD.

## U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

### Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Program (UMTRAP)

The Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) of 1978 authorizes DOE to clean-up inactive uranium processing sites. The goal of the program is to stabilize and control uranium mill tailing piles and other residual radioactive materials to minimize radiation health hazards. You can find a listing of these sites at <http://web.em.doe.gov/bemr96/umtra.html>.

## U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)

### Site Decommissioning Management Plan (SDMP)

The former Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have terminated approximately 33,000 radioactive material licenses during the past four decades. Most facilities do not contain significant amounts of radioactive contamination and do not require radiation clean-up; however, EPA does require clean-up of other toxic materials. As part of the process, licensees must decontaminate and decommission their facilities to allow for unrestricted future use. Depending on the type of site, NRC or state inspectors examine the site to verify removal of contamination before the site cleanup is determine complete and the license is terminated.

## What can you do to protect yourself

- **Be Informed** – Information is the best tool in keeping yourself safe. Knowing about local clean-up sites in your area can help you understand the activities that government agencies are taking to keep you safe. Information also provides you with a greater understanding of protective actions that you should take, if any, regarding your local site.
- **Respect Safety Zones** – Safety zones are often established around contaminated sites. These zones limit public access to hazardous materials that may cause adverse health effects. The people working inside of the safety zone are trained professionals who are educated in safety procedures and potential consequences.

## Resources

You can explore this radiation source further through the resources at the following URL:

<http://www.epa.gov/radtown/clean-up.htm#resources>

We provide these resources on-line rather than here so we can keep the links up-to-date.