

## **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act**

**Agencies:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

**Citation:** [42 U.S.C. §§ 9601 et seq.](#)

**Enacted as:** the “Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980”, on December 11, 1980

### **Summary:**

The [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act](#) (CERCLA), commonly known as Superfund, provides a federal "superfund" to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous-waste sites as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. Through CERCLA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was given power to seek out those parties responsible for any release of pollutants and contaminants, and assure their cooperation in the cleanup.

EPA cleans up orphan sites when potentially responsible parties cannot be identified or located, or when they fail to act. Through various enforcement tools, EPA obtains private party cleanup through orders, consent decrees, and other small party settlements. EPA also recovers costs from financially viable individuals and companies once a response action has been completed.

EPA is authorized to implement CERCLA in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Superfund site identification, monitoring, and response activities in states are coordinated through the state environmental protection or waste management agencies.

The [Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 \(SARA\)](#) reauthorized CERCLA to continue cleanup activities around the country. Several site-specific amendments, definitions clarifications, and technical requirements were added to the legislation, including additional enforcement authorities. Also, Title III of SARA authorized the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

**Source:** <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/cercla.html>

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