



To learn more and read past reports, go to:
hazwaste.floridahealth.gov. Or call us toll-free
at: 1-877-798-2772.

Email us at: PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov

How does the
Florida Department of Health
protect
public health
around
hazardous
waste sites?





The Florida Department of Health protects and promotes the health of people living around hazardous (or toxic) waste sites through a program funded by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The Health Risk Assessment Program reviews tests of air, soil and water taken on and near sites. We review test results to estimate the health risk for people living nearby. We use tests taken by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Department also works closely with local county health departments.

The Department writes public health assessment (PHA) and health consultation (HC) reports. They focus on human health.

WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ASSESSMENT (PHA)?

A PHA works to find out if people are exposed to chemicals at a site. (Remember, you cannot be harmed by chemicals unless you come into contact with them.)

A PHA looks at a hazardous waste site as a whole—the air, soil and water. It answers a number of questions like:

- What kinds of chemicals are at a site?
- How much of the chemicals are there?
- Can people come into contact with them?
- How do the chemical levels found at a site compare with those known to harm health?
- What is the past, present and future health risk?

In order to predict the health risk from a site, we look at levels known to harm the health of the most sensitive people. These include children, the elderly, and pregnant or nursing mothers.

We also take into account community concerns about how the site affects people's health. We respond to these concerns in our final health report. Meanwhile, if the Department finds a public health threat, we tell the community right away.

WHAT IS A HEALTH CONSULTATION (HC)?

An HC is a shorter, simpler version of a PHA. It focuses on one issue or set of test results of air, soil, or water on or near a site. For example, an HC may address site chemicals washing off in stormwater onto a nearby schoolyard.

WHAT A PHA OR HC IS NOT:

A PHA or HC is not:

- A medical exam.
- A review of medical records of people living near a hazardous waste site.
- A community health study.
- A door-to-door health survey.
- A health study of current or former workers.
- A clean-up plan.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE DEPARTMENT WRITES A PHA OR HC?

Once we write a PHA or HC, the Department:

- Tells the public about our findings and recommendations.
- Advises people how to protect themselves from contact with site chemicals, if they are at risk.
- Informs nearby health care providers about our findings and gives them helpful materials, if the public is at risk.
- Advises cleanup agencies on health issues.
- Works with the public to determine if additional studies are needed.
- Works with other agencies to help answer community health questions.

WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT NOT DO AT HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES?

The Department does not:

- Make or enforce laws or rules that cover toxic waste.
- Provide medical services for people who come into contact with toxic waste.
- Provide cleanup or relocation.
- Take samples, except for private well water testing.