



# County of San Diego

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## Voluntary Assistance Program

### A Voluntary Approach for Resolution of Environmental Contamination

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[http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/lwqd/sam\\_voluntary\\_assistance\\_program.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/lwqd/sam_voluntary_assistance_program.html)

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**Department of Environmental Health and Quality**  
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#### Program Overview

The Voluntary Assistance Program (VAP) provides staff consultation, project oversight, and technical and environmental report evaluation on projects pertaining to properties suspected or known to be contaminated with hazardous substances. The Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) utilizes its experience and knowledge of environmental assessment, cleanup, and risk evaluation to facilitate the rapid and cost-effective resolution of soil and groundwater contamination problems.

Assistance is customized to meet the needs of the applicant. If a “No Further Action” letter or “Concurrence” letter is desired, the technical information, findings and recommendations in the reports submitted must demonstrate that human health and the environment are adequately protected.

#### Examples of Review Projects

- Property Phase I and Phase II reports for lenders and potential buyers;
- Phase II environmental assessment work-plans, prior to initiating work;
- Planning/Building Department requirements for review of potential contamination impact;
- Release of cleaning solvents from dry cleaning operations;
- Cleanup of fuel, waste oil, and other chemical spills;
- Conversion of gas stations to retail facilities (petroleum contamination); and
- Conversion of agricultural to residential land-use (pesticide concerns).

## **Brownfields**

US-EPA defines Brownfields as abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived hazardous chemical contamination. DEHQ provides regulatory overview and/or third-party concurrence for Brownfield activities.

## **Site Designation Process**

Some environmental cleanup projects can involve multiple sites overseen by several regulatory agencies. The CAL-EPA Site Designation Process allows one agency to act as the administering agency for the entire project, with the ability to issue a Certificate of Completion. DEHQ can serve as the administering agency through the Site Designation Process.

## **Conditions of Review**

- Allow a minimum of 30 days for DEHQ to review the initial documents.
- DEHQ may refuse to accept an application for technical or legal reasons.
- The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) will be notified of the review.
- All reports and project files submitted to this program will be available for public review.
- Copies of all DEHQ correspondence will be forwarded to the legal property owner.
- All documents containing geologic and/or contaminant migration interpretations must be signed by an experienced professional with the appropriate California registration or certification.
- Fees are established by the County of San Diego and invoices are sent monthly to the Financial Responsible Party. DEHQ requires the establishment of a trust account prior to review. The current review rate is \$227 per hour. An initial deposit of \$4,540 (20 hours of review) is required with application.
- Staff assistance will not be provided on projects without sufficient funds in the trust account.
- Upon satisfactory completion of activities, a "no further action" letter or "concurrence" letter will be issued.
- The submitted package should contain all relevant documentation, data, and reports. The most commonly submitted documents are Work plans, Phase I Reports, Phase II Reports, and Health Risk Evaluations. All reports should include data interpretations and recommendations. Thorough documentation results in faster review.
- All work is to be in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements, industry practices, and the current version of the DEHQ Site Assessment and Mitigation Manual.

## **How to Apply**

The following items must be submitted for DEHQ to begin the review process:

- **Application Form.** This form allows the applicant(s) to identify their specific project goals. The form must be signed by the property owner and Financial Responsible Party.
- **Initial Fee.** Include a check for \$4,540, payable to County of San Diego. This covers the first twenty hours of staff time on the project.

An applicant may withdraw from the program through written notification. Other environmental agencies will be notified if significant contamination is present and/or the contamination may pose a threat to public health and safety. The file will remain available for public review.

## **For Further Information**

### **DEHQ File Review**

Phone: (858) 505-6921

[Deh.publicrecords@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Deh.publicrecords@sdcounty.ca.gov) (web)

### **Other DEHQ Services**

Site Assessment and Mitigation Program Duty Specialist: (858) 505-6808

DEHQ Duty Specialist: (858) 505-6700