

# Fact Sheet

# United States Navy

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## Restoration Advisory Boards

The Department of the Navy is investigating past disposal of hazardous substances on the Naval Weapons Station at Seal Beach. The program is operated under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) formally established by Congress and funded via the Defense Environmental Restoration Account (DERA).

Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station is not on the National Priorities List (commonly referred to as Superfund sites) which lists locations of greatest concern in the nation.

The Naval Weapons Station has 25 potentially impacted locations under the Superfund process and approximately 50 sites under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Superfund, or the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), deals with past disposal practices (before 1980) and RCRA with present operations and release of contaminants.

### Creation of RABs

Many people have believed that the Community Relations process in the Superfund program was not allowing the public to really participate in the clean-up process at Federal facilities. The Interim Report of the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee dated February 1993, is a consensus document chartered by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. One key recommendation from this report is to share information on clean up activities with community stakeholders.

For some time the Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach has provided documents generated by the Navy's Installation Restoration Program (IRP), for review to a Technical Review Committee (TRC). This committee consists of local city representatives, regulatory agencies, some local private organizations and citizens as well as representatives from the Navy. Current Navy policy changing the process that shares information with community stakeholders, is to expand the TRC and to establish a Restoration Advisory Board.

### What Is A RAB?

A RAB is a group of individuals (members) that will give advice on the clean-up process at the Seal Beach facility. RAB members will be asked to meet regularly, to review and comment on technical documents and plans that relate to the ongoing environmental cleanup at the facility.

Membership is open to interested members of the local community who are willing to serve a two-year term. Including local community members on the board will ensure that the diverse interests of the community are represented and will provide

for an early and continued two-way flow of information, needs, concerns and values between the general community, the Navy and the Seal Beach Facility.

Members will not make decisions on environmental cleanup actions at the Seal Beach facility. However, members will be able to provide important information, suggestions, and community input on the cleanup process. This input will be used to make decisions on proposed actions for cleanup.

### Why A RAB?

To facilitate the interaction between interested citizens and the Navy the RAB process is needed to accomplish the following goals:

- consistent opportunity for involvement;
- regular, early, and effective public participation in federal clean-up programs; and consolidation of the many public involvement initiatives addressing the clean-up process.

### Responsibilities Of A RAB

Meetings - to hold regular meetings open to the public at convenient times and locations.

Mailing List - to develop and use a list of interested parties who wish to receive information on the cleanup program.

Recommendations - to provide a forum for individual members to give advice and to make recommendations on environmental restoration issues.

Public Participation - to establish a procedure for responding to questions and comments from the public at RAB meetings.

### How Do I Become A RAB Member?

Community members interested in finding out more about the RAB, its purpose and membership opportunities, are invited and encouraged to attend the first information meeting on creating a RAB for the Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach.

The RAB Information Meeting will be held at:

**City of Seal Beach City Council Chambers  
211 8th Street, Seal Beach, California  
7:00 p.m. Thursday October 13th.**

For more information contact Mr. Steve McDonald at the Naval Weapons Station Safety and Environmental Department 310-626-7318. All membership applications are welcome and must be received by November 14, 1994

Should the need arise, Cal EPA's Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Navy, and members of the local community will review the applications in an effort to assemble a diverse group that is representative of the community.

# Federal Facility Hazardous Waste Cleanup Background

The Federal Facility environmental restoration challenge is enormous. The environmental legacy of the federal government's mission-oriented activities is felt in communities throughout the country. Environmental clean-up of the 24,000 sites on federal facilities in the United States may ultimately cost as much as \$400 billion and will extend well into the next century. From a technical perspective, these cleanups are likely to be particularly complex and challenging. Equally challenging is the process by which federal facility clean-up decisions are made. From the perspective of many participants, the current process has been unnecessarily hampered by feelings of mistrust and conflict over the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and authorities of regulated and regulating agencies and other affected stakeholders. Reinvigorating the process will require a fundamental change in the way the clean-up process is managed. The cornerstone of this change must involve a shift from the decide, announce and defend mode of public involvement to a new partnership between all of the affected stakeholders.

Over the past decade it has become increasingly clear that environmental contamination at federally owned and operated facilities poses a significant challenge for the nation. Over this period, it has also become clear that there are many interests that have a stake in and are concerned about what is occurring at these facilities.

With the passage of statutory provisions under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) [as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Re-Authorization Act (SARA)] and the corresponding increased attention that has been placed on identifying environmental contamination at federal facilities, the immense magnitude of this problem has become clear. [The Defense Department estimates that there are more than 15,000 sites where hazardous substances may have been released at nearly 1,900 facilities owned or operated by the Department of Defense. The Defense Department estimates its clean-up cost to be in the range of \$25 Billion.] Clean-up efforts are projected to continue well into the 21st Century.

By any measure, the cost of cleaning up the environmental contamination that is currently known to exist at federal facilities is enormous. Such costs must be borne by the taxpayers because of the public purposes served by these facilities. More significantly, these costs must be borne by the taxpayers in an era of increasing concerns over the growing federal budget deficit.

Many who are involved in managing federal facility clean-up programs, as well as those who are regulating or affected by these programs, are becoming increasingly concerned with the ability of the nation to maintain the necessary level of funding to meet current clean-up goals. Because of these concerns,

there has been an increasing amount of attention paid to the need to establish publicly supported priorities as the study and actual clean-up of these facilities proceed.

As the sheer magnitude of federal facility environmental contamination has become clear, so have the technical complexities of these problems. In many instances federal facility environmental contamination problem poses threats to human health and the environment that are similar to those that are found at private sector sites. However, in numerous other situations, especially those found at the major defense production facilities owned and operated by the DOE, the technical dimensions of the environmental contamination problems are perhaps as complex as those found anywhere in the world.

Environmental contamination confronts federal agencies with challenges that are often fundamentally different from those of their primary missions. Although clean-up problems exist at facilities owned by most federal agencies, the number

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and severity of these problems are greatest at sites managed by the DOD and DOE. The facilities that are owned by these agencies were built and operated primarily to serve the nation's defense needs. As in the private sector, many of the environmental contamination problems at these facilities had their genesis in an era when there were few laws or regulations to address the disposal of hazardous and radioactive wastes. Furthermore, the national defense missions of these facilities were seen as paramount. Often this mission required a high degree of secrecy (and in some instances still does) regarding the precise nature of the activities that were taking place at these facilities.

With increased knowledge of environmental contamination at these facilities, there has been an ever increasing level of public demand to clean them up. DOD and DOE have often tried to deal with rising public interest and concerns, as well as increased regulatory oversight, through traditional command and control approaches that have worked well in the context of their national defense missions. Although much progress has been made toward bringing federal facilities into compliance with state and federal environmental laws, there remain significant management and public credibility problems which jeopardize efforts to prioritize clean-up projects and form strategies for reaching long term environmental restoration objectives.

...public involvement is essential for achieving publicly supported priorities for clean-up. Federal agencies recognize and support the legitimate and important role the public has in helping to identify clean-up priorities.

**From: Interim Report of the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee  
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