
Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) Report Guide

Chapter 447 of the WSDOT Environmental Manual lists out triggers for real estate transactions and whether a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is needed. The following guidance assists those conducting a Phase I ESA for all real estate transactions where property is being acquired, and for permanent or temporary easements. The intent is to identify environmental liability under Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA ...i.e. Superfund) and/or corresponding state law prior to the real estate transaction.

The initiation of obtaining access and conversations with the owner/operators/tenants will be through Real Estate Services. It is preferred that a Real Estate Services representative be on site accompanying the Environmental Site Assessor in the walk through and interview questions.

Please follow Chapter 447 of the WSDOT Environmental Manual on what triggers a transactional review, a Phase I, and note a Phase II recommendation is required in the conclusion. The following is guidance to assist WSDOT employees and consultants in conducting a Phase I ESA. Phase I ESAs must be prepared in conformance with American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) E1527-21 and the All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) Final Rule requirements of 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 312. Ultimately the report will assist the RES appraiser in answering if the sale price reasonably reflects the fair market value (FMV)? If the price is lower than FMV, is it due to known contamination and environmental liability on the property?

Cover Page:

Project name, report type, address/location information, date, image of structure and/or area requiring the ESA.

Title Page:

Title information, signature block of document preparer (if different from Environmental Professional), signature block of Environmental Professional (optional)

Executive Summary:

Table of Contents:

1.0 Introduction

This section introduces why this report is being done, location, by whom, for whom.

1.1 Purpose

Describes the objective of the Phase I ESA, which is to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs), Historical Recognized Environmental Conditions (HRECs), and Controlled Recognized Environmental Conditions (CRECs) and other relevant conditions as defined by ASTM E1527-21.

1.2 Scope of Services/Methodology

Details the services provided during the assessment, including site visits, records review, and interviews.

1.3 Significant Assumptions, Limitations and Exceptions

Lists any assumptions made during the assessment, as well as limitations and exceptions that may affect the findings.

1.4 Involved Parties

Identifies the parties involved in the assessment, including the customers like owners, residents, consultants, and agencies.

1.5 Special Terms and Conditions

Outlines any special terms and conditions agreed upon for the assessment.

2.0 Site Description

Provides a detailed description of the site, including its location, legal description, and physical setting.

2.1 Location, Legal Description, and Setting

Describes the geographical location, legal boundaries, parcel data, topography, geological and hydrological setting of the property.

2.2 Descriptions of Structures, Roads, and Other Improvements

Details the existing structures, roads, and other improvements on the property.

2.3 Current Uses of the Property

Describes how the property is currently being used.

2.4 Past Uses of the Property (to the extent identified)

Provides information on the historical uses of the property.

2.5 Current/Past Uses of Adjoining Properties (to the extent identified)

Describes the current and past uses of properties adjacent to the subject property.

3.0 User Provided Information

Summarizes information provided by the user, records, specialized knowledge, and purchase price.

3.1 Records on the Subject Property

Lists any environmental liens, controls, or use limitation records related to the property.

3.2 Actual and Specialized Knowledge

Details any specialized knowledge or actual knowledge the user has about the property.

3.3 Purchase Price (Provided by RES)

Provides information on the purchase price of the property.

4.0 Records Review

Reviews standard environmental records from federal, state, and tribal sources, as well as other relevant reports. This can be done through reviewing each purchasing reports or ordering a summary report, like an EDR report. Typically the report will look at the property/Structures being evaluated and expand its review to 0.5 miles RECs and 1 mile for any Superfund Site.

4.1 Standard Environmental Records Sources, Federal and State

Lists the standard environmental records reviewed from federal and state sources including local agency records, Department of Ecology's Facility/Site search and Cleanup and Tank search, US EPA Superfund search, etc..

4.2 Federal Records as specified by ASTM E1527-21

Details the federal records reviewed as specified by ASTM E1527-21 (National Priority List, Superfund Enterprise Management System, Corrective Action Report, RCRA Treatment Storage and Disposal Facilities search, RCRA Generators Facilities, Emergency Response Notification System, Institutional/Engineering Control Registries, etc.).

4.3 State and Tribal Records as Specified by ASTM E1527-21

Details the state and tribal records reviewed as specified by ASTM E1527-21 (Hazardous Sites List, Confirmed and Suspected Contaminated Sites List, Leaking Underground Storage Tank database, Underground Storage Tank database, Voluntary Cleanup Program, Institutional Controls Remedial Actions, Brownfields Sites, Confirmed and Suspected Contaminated Sites List, Solid Waste/Recycling Facility Permit Holders, etc.).

4.4 Other Reports Reviewed

Lists any additional reports reviewed during the assessment.

4.5 Environmental Liens

Identifies any environmental liens on the property. Please coordinate with Real Estate Services and also look to local authority and EDR report for liens.

4.6 Physical Setting Sources

Describes the physical setting sources reviewed, including geology and hydrology. Any structures near or within the area being evaluated.

4.7 Geology and Hydrology

Provides information on the geology and hydrology of the property. Please include groundwater flow directions, depth to groundwater, wetlands, streams, tidal influence, and other surface water features.

4.8 Historical Use Information

Summarizes historical use information for the property.

5.0 Site Reconnaissance

Details the observations made during the site reconnaissance, including interior, exterior, and adjoining site observations, and relevant information gathered from the user interview.

5.1 Site Observations

Describes the observations made on the site.

5.1.1 Interior Observations

Details the interior observations of any structures and overall observation made during the site visit.

5.1.2 Exterior Observations

Details the exterior observations of the structures made during the site visit.

5.1.3 Adjoining Sites Observations

Describes the observations made on adjoining sites.

5.2 Summary of Site Reconnaissance

Provides a summary of the site reconnaissance findings.

6.0 Information from Interviews

Summarizes information gathered from interviews with knowledgeable individuals. See questions below.

7.0 Findings and Conclusions

Presents the findings and conclusions of the assessment, including any data gaps, discussions, and recommendations.

7.1 Data Gaps

Identifies any data gaps encountered during the assessment.

7.2 Findings and Discussion

Discusses the findings of the assessment.

7.3 Conclusions

Provides the conclusions drawn from the assessment.

7.4 Recommendations

Offers recommendations based on the findings and conclusions. Include a statement if a phase II is not necessary (no or low risk), is recommended (low risk to moderate risk), or required (high and confirmed contamination in documentation or observations).

8.0 Environmental Professional Statement

Includes a statement from the environmental professional responsible for contents of the assessment.

Appendices

Contains any additional supporting documents and information.

Interview Questions for Site Visit

1. Name:
 2. Relationship to the site (owner, worker, tenant):
 3. How long have you owned or worked on this property?
 4. How long have you lived or worked in the area of the property?
 5. What is the property used for today?
 6. Do you know of any previous uses of the property?
 7. Have any previous environmental assessments been done for this property or has this property been included in other environmental assessments?
 8. To your knowledge had there been any Hazardous Building Materials (HBM) in these structures such as asbestos or lead-based paint?
 9. Have there been any HBM assessments performed on the structure(s) / property?
 10. Do you know of any chemicals used or being used on the structure(s) property?
 11. Any fuel storage or handling in the structures or on the property?
 12. Are there any drums or containers with chemicals in the structures or on the property?
 13. Are you aware of any spills or hazardous materials in the structures or on the property?
 14. Are you aware of any illegal dumping in the structures or on the property?
 15. Are any types of wastes generated?
 16. What waste disposal methods are used?
 17. Are there utilities on the property? Water, telephone, sewer, electricity, wastewater, natural gas, heating fuel?
 18. Are there any:
 - a. USTs (underground storage tanks)?
 - b. ASTs (aboveground storage tanks)?
 - c. Evidence of underground storage tanks, such as pipes or fill ports?
 - d. Septic tanks?
 - e. Transformers?
 - f. Generators?
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19. Are you aware of any Fires on the property? If there were any fires, what was used for fire suppression?
 20. Are you aware of any Meth labs in the area?
 21. Do you know of anyone else who would have knowledge of the property?
 22. Are you aware of any environmental liens, engineering controls (e.g., caps), or institutional controls (e.g., restricted uses) in place or recorded for this property?
 23. Do you have any knowledge of potential past activities on or adjacent to the property that might pose an environmental concern? Also, have you observed or are knowledgeable of any environmental features/concerns on or near the property that have resulted or could result in contamination on the property?
 24. Do you have any other information, beyond that already transmitted to us, regarding the property or surrounding properties that might indicate a release or threatened release of contaminants?
 25. Does the sale price reasonably reflect the fair market value (FMV)? If the price is lower than FMV, is it due to known or perceived contamination on the property? For WSDOT Real Estate to answer.
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Site Visit Observations:

To be conducted by the Site Assessor and Team. Please take and label pictures and note any site observations including odors.

1. Access to Property:
 2. Drainage Paths:
 3. Storage Tanks:
 4. Obvious Odors:
 5. Evidence of Landfills, Dumping, or Burial Activities:
 6. Evidence of Surface Impoundments or Holding Ponds:
 7. Evidence of Air Emissions or Wastewater Discharge:
 8. Monitoring Wells or Remedial Activities:
 9. Evidence of Stained or Discolored Soils:
 10. Evidence of Leachate or Seeps:
 11. Evidence of Distressed, Discolored, or Stained Vegetation:
 12. Evidence of Chemical Spills or Releases:
 13. Evidence of Groundwater or Surface Water Contamination:
 14. Discharges, Leachate, Migration, or Runoff of Potential Contaminants from Off-Property Sources:
 15. Other Known or Observed Environmentally Sensitive Conditions:
 16. Transformers and PCB Equipment:
 17. On-Property Regulated Substance Identification/Inventory:
 18. Adjacent Property Use:
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