



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Land Quality Division
Environmental Cleanup

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Alternative formats
Alternative formats (large type, Braille) of this document can be made available. Contact the DEQ Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5317, or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5317, for more information.

New DEQ Guidance: Environmental Assessment of Lands Formerly Used for Agricultural Production

Background

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has published a new guidance document for environmental assessment of formerly used agricultural lands that are likely to be (or already have been) converted to residential, school, commercial, or industrial uses. The intent of this guidance is to provide information to property owners and others to help protect new site users when such development occurs.

Dealing with past problems

In some cases, past agricultural operations may have led to the presence of hazardous substances that exceed acceptable risk levels for residential and commercial properties, as defined in Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 465.315.

If environmental conditions are not properly evaluated and addressed during site development, children and adults could be exposed to hazardous substances that may cause cancer or create other adverse health effects. In addition, Oregon's environmental cleanup law places responsibility on current and past owners of property for contamination that may exist, as well as for site investigation and cleanup costs.

For these reasons, DEQ recommends environmental investigations of agricultural lands that may have been contaminated by hazardous substances, before these lands are developed.

Scope of this guidance

This guidance will help environmental consultants, property developers, city/county planners, and others who identify potential site acquisition and development issues associated with conversion of formerly used agricultural lands.

In particular, the guidance should assist in evaluating the nature and extent of on-site pesticides, if any, as well as other potential sources of hazardous substances on former agricultural lands. The guidance generally calls for sampling (at different but defined densities for various uses) where past applications of persistent pesticides are known or suspected. The guidance emphasizes protection of human health over potential ecological concerns. Finally, except in unusual circumstances, investigations will not extend off-site.

As with other DEQ guidance, this document is not enforceable by DEQ or others, and does not create any new requirements or obligations.

For more information

You can obtain a copy of the guidance at: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/pubs/docs/cu/GuidanceEvalResidualPesticides.pdf>

You may also obtain a copy of the guidance by contacting Gil Wistar in Portland, at (503) 229-5512 (toll-free in OR at 800-452-4011, x5512), or by e-mail: wistar.gil@deq.state.or.us.