

Both the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conduct evaluations or assessments on the sites they are involved in. Here is what they do.

ATSDR Public Health Assessment

ATSDR evaluates the potential health impacts of hazardous waste sites or spills. These assessments are called “health assessments” or “health consultations.” Health assessments determine:

- if there is a completed exposure pathway,
- if there have been exposures, and
- the possible health effects of those exposures.

What Does an ATSDR Health Assessment Do?

Through its public health assessments, ATSDR responds to site-specific environmental concerns from private citizens, and state and federal agencies. ATSDR health assessments on sites include the following:

- an evaluation of the information available about site-specific contaminants,
- a determination whether people might be exposed to environmental hazards from the site,
- a determination of what harm exposure to site contaminants might cause, and
- recommendations for actions to protect people's health.

EPA Risk Assessment

EPA prioritizes contaminated properties for

clean up. These priorities are made by conducting a “risk assessment.” These EPA priorities are:

- what areas at the site need to be cleaned up,
- the level of clean up, and
- in what order these areas should be cleaned up.

What Does an EPA Risk Assessment Do?

EPA develops a scenario of health risks based on what people are likely to do on a site. The EPA risk assessment determines:

- if something should be done at the site,
- what actions should be taken, and
- when enough has been done.

ATSDR focuses on the exposed or potentially exposed people, and the agency recommends or performs appropriate prevention and follow-up health activities.

EPA focuses on the environmental contamination and what is to be done about it.

Together, ATSDR and EPA ensure that people get the information and services they need to make sure their families are protected from actual or potential hazards to human health from contaminants released into the environment.

ATSDR focuses on the exposed or potentially exposed people.

EPA focuses on environmental contamination and what is to be done about it.