

FACT FLASH

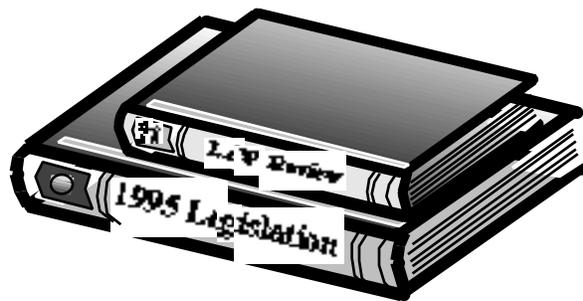
11: Other Major Environmental Laws

Congress has enacted a series of environmental laws that work together to protect our health, our environment, and our future. Some laws are about protecting natural resources, some are about protecting people, and some affect how businesses and governments can act. They all work together to make a cleaner, safer world. Laws set out a framework or a basic outline of what needs to be done. Then a government agency, in this case EPA, writes rules, regulations, and policies to fulfill what the law says should be done. The laws described in this Fact Flash are Federal laws. That means they apply to the entire United States. Each state also has its own laws and its own agencies to implement its laws. Most of the Fact Flashes talk about CERCLA and the Superfund Program. Here are some other important environmental laws.

Resource Recovery and Conservation Act (RCRA)

RCRA controls hazardous waste management from generation through disposal, including the waste generators, transporters, and owners and operators of waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. Requirements are enforced through permits that specify the practices and conditions that must be followed by hazardous waste handlers. RCRA applies mainly to tracking and ensuring safe management of hazardous waste from creation to disposal. RCRA works together with Superfund, which

addresses the serious problem of abandoned wastes and inactive hazardous waste facilities. Superfund handles the mistakes of the past, and RCRA tries to prevent the creation of new hazardous sites.



RCRA also regulates solid waste management and the underground storage tank (UST) program. There are nearly two million USTs around the country. USTs can harm the environment through leaks or spills. UST owners and operators must clean up any damage their tanks may have caused. New tanks must also meet stringent standards and be operated to minimize the chance of leaks or spills.

Clean Air Act (CAA)

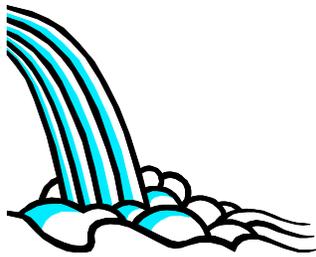
The Clean Air Act restricts the kinds and amounts of pollutants that may be released into the air by cars, industry, and other sources. The CAA requires states to control air pollution through the use of permits. All air pollution sources must meet emission limits set by state plans. These plans describe the

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pollution control and permit requirements for new emission sources. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are the basis of the CAA program and cover air emission standards for sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, and lead. For each, there is a primary standard that protects human health with an adequate safety cushion, and a secondary, more stringent, standard that better promotes public welfare.

Clean Water Act (CWA)

CWA regulates the pollution that will reach surface waters (rivers, lakes, ponds and streams). Like the CAA,



discharge of pollutants from recognized sources is controlled by issuing permits. The law prohibits a point source from

discharging pollutants into the water unless the discharge meets certain permit requirements. A point source is generally the point at which a facility discharges wastewater, such as a paper mill emptying wastewater into a creek via a pipe.

The centerpiece of the CWA is the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. There are many types of NPDES permits, depending on the type of discharge and the water quality standards being applied to the discharge. The NPDES permit

may allow a permittee to discharge an authorized level of a pollutant, but require that any failures to comply with the permit be reported. NPDES permitting is a complex process. The CWA also protects wetlands and provides grants for communities to build sewer treatment plants.

Oil Pollution Act (OPA)

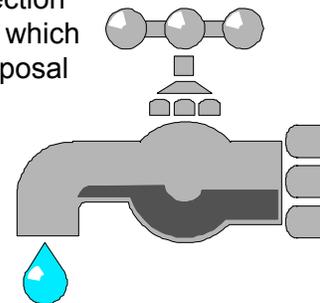
OPA, passed in 1990, establishes liability and compensation rules related to oil spills, and creates a \$1 billion supplemental compensation fund for oil spills. OPA focuses on liability and compensation after a spill has occurred, and guides cleanup of contaminated areas. Like Superfund, OPA's fund can be used for cleanups if responsible parties can't or won't do the work themselves.

Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)

SDWA ensures that our tap water is fit to drink. Passed in 1974, SDWA sets national drinking water standards for public systems that deliver water to the tap. SDWA also protects groundwater through the

underground injection control program, which regulates the disposal of liquid waste in underground wells, and the wellhead protection program, which prevents contamination

of areas surrounding public wells.



SDWA is used with RCRA and CERCLA to protect and clean up groundwater by setting water quality standards.

Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)

TSCA, passed in 1976, requires tests of chemicals that may harm human health or the environment; reviews of new chemical substances; limits on the availability of some existing chemicals; and import certification standards to ensure that imported chemicals comply with domestic rules. TSCA bars the introduction of chemicals that may pose unreasonable risks to people or the environment, when the risks outweigh possible economic and social benefits. TSCA also regulates existing chemicals, particularly PCBs. For PCBs and a few other chemicals, TSCA prohibits or limits use and regulates handling, storage, and disposal.

Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)

Passed in 1972, FIFRA regulates the manufacture and use of pesticides and allows EPA to restrict or prohibit use of particularly harmful pesticides.

Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA)

EPCRA makes sure people have an



opportunity to find out what chemical hazards are in a community, and helps communities plan for chemical accidents or incidents. EPCRA requires states to develop plans to prepare for possible chemical accidents or emergencies. It also makes businesses report annually on the chemicals they use and store and the amount of toxic chemicals they have released into the environment. This information is available to the public.

Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)

OSHA sets minimum health and safety standards for the workplace. Private employers must protect their employees by following OSHA requirements. OSHA, RCRA, TSCA, FIFRA, and EPCRA share common reporting and record-keeping requirements, and EPA and OSHA cross-train their inspectors to look for both environmental and OSHA violations.

