
Hazardous Waste Guide for Project Development



February 1990

**Prepared by the
AASHTO Special Committee on
Environment, Archaeology and
Historical Preservation**

**Published by the
American Association of State
Highway and Transportation Officials**

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Introduction

The presence of a hazardous waste at the site of a proposed project can lead to substantial project delays and increased project costs, particularly if the waste goes undetected until the project is under construction. Such materials that may constitute a hazardous waste include pesticides, organic compounds, heavy metals, and other compounds injurious to human health and the environment.

This guideline is for those projects where it is unknown whether or not a hazardous waste potential exists. This guideline lays out steps to determine if there is hazardous waste present and what tasks are involved if there is one present. These steps can be used for new projects where the project decision has not been made as well as for projects where right of way has already been acquired. Where these hazardous waste tasks occur in the steps in the project development process are shown in Figure 1, and the specific steps in the hazardous waste process are shown in Figure 2.

Initial Site Assessment

The earlier a hazardous waste site is discovered, the more options there are to avoid, or to at least minimize, involvement. As early as possible in the project development phase, an Initial Site Assessment (ISA) should be done to identify any known or potential waste site within the project limits.

Generally, every project which includes the purchase of new right of way, excavation, or structure demolition or modification, will require at least an ISA to determine if there is any known or potential hazardous waste within the proposed project limits. Projects such as work within the existing right of way when there is no substantial change to the cross section, grade, or utilities involved generally do not have a hazardous waste potential and require no further screening.

The ISA is essentially a stepped procedure. The first step is to use a check list (shown in Figure 3) to determine the potential for hazardous waste at a project site. A field inspection of present land uses is done. How the land is being used may indicate the potential for contaminated soils, as well as the presence of sumps, underground tanks, or steel drums. Especially suspect are landfills, dumps, service stations, paint companies, machine shops, metal processing plants, chemical manufacturing facilities, electronic facilities, dry cleaning establishments, and other similar uses.