



Fast Facts

There are hazardous waste sites located across the state with about two-thirds of Georgia counties containing at least one hazardous waste site.

Fulton and Chatham counties are home to the highest concentration of hazardous waste sites.

About 65% of hazardous waste sites inventoried are being cleaned-up by the responsible parties. About 25% are local government landfills. About 10% are abandoned sites. Since its inception, Georgia EPD has removed 224 hazardous waste sites from the inventory.

The majority of hazardous waste sites go from listing to delisting in 5 years or less.

For More Information:
Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter
Mark Woodall

Preserve the Integrity of the Hazardous Waste Clean-Up

What's at Stake?

If not properly cleaned up by those responsible, hazardous waste can contaminate soil and drinking water supply and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) is charged with regulating government and businesses that generate and store hazardous waste, investigating spills and releases, and administering the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund to pay for the clean-up of some contaminated sites.

EPD uses the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund to:

- Investigate and clean up abandoned hazardous sites
- Help local governments investigate and clean up old leaking landfills
- Review private party investigation and cleanup plans for adequacy and oversee private party cleanups to ensure cleanup standards are met
- Pay for EPD administrative costs
- Fund the Pollution Prevention Assistance Division (P2AD)

The Hazardous Waste Trust Fund is financed by fees, surcharges and civil penalties. The fund collected almost \$20 million in FY08. According to Georgia Code, these revenues shall not lapse to the general fund. Yet the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund has been raided for millions of dollars over the years because there is no mechanism in place, like a constitutional amendment, to ensure appropriate allocation. Continued under funding of the Hazardous Waste Program will adversely affect the health and safety of Georgia's citizens, harm affected local governments and impede economic growth.

Challenges

Georgia's Hazardous Site Inventory (HSI) lists 575 sites, as of July 2008, where there has been a known or suspected release of a regulated substance above a reportable quantity and which have yet to show they meet state clean-up standards.

These sites range from Class I sites to Class V sites. Sites listed on the HSI are prioritized based on the population drinking groundwater within ½ mile, population living within ½ mile, number of HSI sites within 3 miles and toxicity of chemical.

The majority of sites are Class II, which means further evaluation of the site must be done before EPD can decide whether corrective action is needed. Persons responsible for Class II sites are given an opportunity to voluntarily investigate and clean up their site and report their findings to EPD. The site is either removed from the HSI or reclassified as Class I, III, or IV based on whether it meets the clean-up standards.

In previous years, the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund has been raided. This has led to delays in hiring of EPD personnel needed to investigate sites and efficiently run the program, clean-up of abandoned sites, and reimbursements to local governments.

Next Steps

The Legislature should:

- Maintain strong state clean-up standards for hazardous waste sites
- Fully appropriate fees, surcharges and civil penalties to the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund
- Enact a resolution for a Constitutional Amendment that will dedicate the hazardous waste fees and penalties for their intended purpose.