



WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Solid Waste Program – Site Hazard Assessment (SHA) Program

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Site Hazard Assessment (SHA) Program

The SHA Program uses analytical data, historical and geographical information to estimate the potential threat to human health and the environment at suspected and known contaminated properties (discovered or reported by the generators or complainants) in Whatcom County. These sites are evaluated and scored using the Washington Ranking Method (WARM) devised by the Department of Ecology, in accordance with the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). Sites are scored and compared to others in the state, and a 'rank' of 1 to 5 is assigned based on their risk relative to other contaminated sites. A rank of '1' represents the highest relative level of concern and '5' represents the lowest.

Sites where an evaluation shows either that no release of a hazardous substance has occurred or that the release or threatened release does not pose a threat to human health or the environment will receive a recommendation of no further action (NFA) under MTCA.

Frequently Asked Questions

What contaminated sites do we have in our County and where are they?

You can see what sites have confirmed contamination and have been ranked and added to Ecology's Hazardous Sites List by going to Ecology's web page http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/mtca_gen/hazsites.html, and searching for sites under Whatcom County, which is in the Northwest Region. You may also contact us at Environmentalhealth@whatcomcounty.us and we will provide you with a copy of the list.

How can I get information on sites that you have investigated?

You can review our files by submitting a [request for public records](#).

How can I avoid getting my property placed on the Hazardous Sites list?

Before listing your property on the Hazardous Sites list, a site hazard assessment must be completed and a threat to human health and/or the environment must be demonstrated. If your contamination or release is reported to us prior to Ecology's listing on the Suspected and Contaminated Hazardous Sites list, we might be able to suggest cleanup methods and guide your efforts to avoid the SHA process. Sometimes, a property will be added to the Suspected and Contaminated Hazardous Sites list (awaiting SHA) due to failure to conduct a cleanup in a timely manner.

I saw my neighbors dump oil onto the ground, next to the creek and I think they've been doing this for a long time. Is there anything you can do?

Yes, contact us at Environmentalhealth@whatcomcounty.us and request an investigation. We will go to the site, take some soil and water samples, if necessary, to determine the extent of contamination, if any. Your name and information you provide will remain confidential.

Other Agency Resources:

Ecology Toxics Cleanup Program – (425) 649-7000

Ecology Complaints Tracker – (425) 649-7000