



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

DRAFT
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Portac Inc.
4215 SR 509 E
Tacoma, Washington

Facility Site Number 1215
Cleanup Site Number 3642

Prepared by
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INTRODUCTION

Public participation plans promote meaningful involvement during cleanups. This plan describes the tools the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) will use to inform the public and gather input about the Portac Inc. cleanup.

LOCATION

The Portac Inc. site is located at 4215 SR 509 E in Tacoma. The site is on the Tacoma tideflats at the head of the Blair Waterway, on Commencement Bay. Commencement Bay is a federal Superfund site.

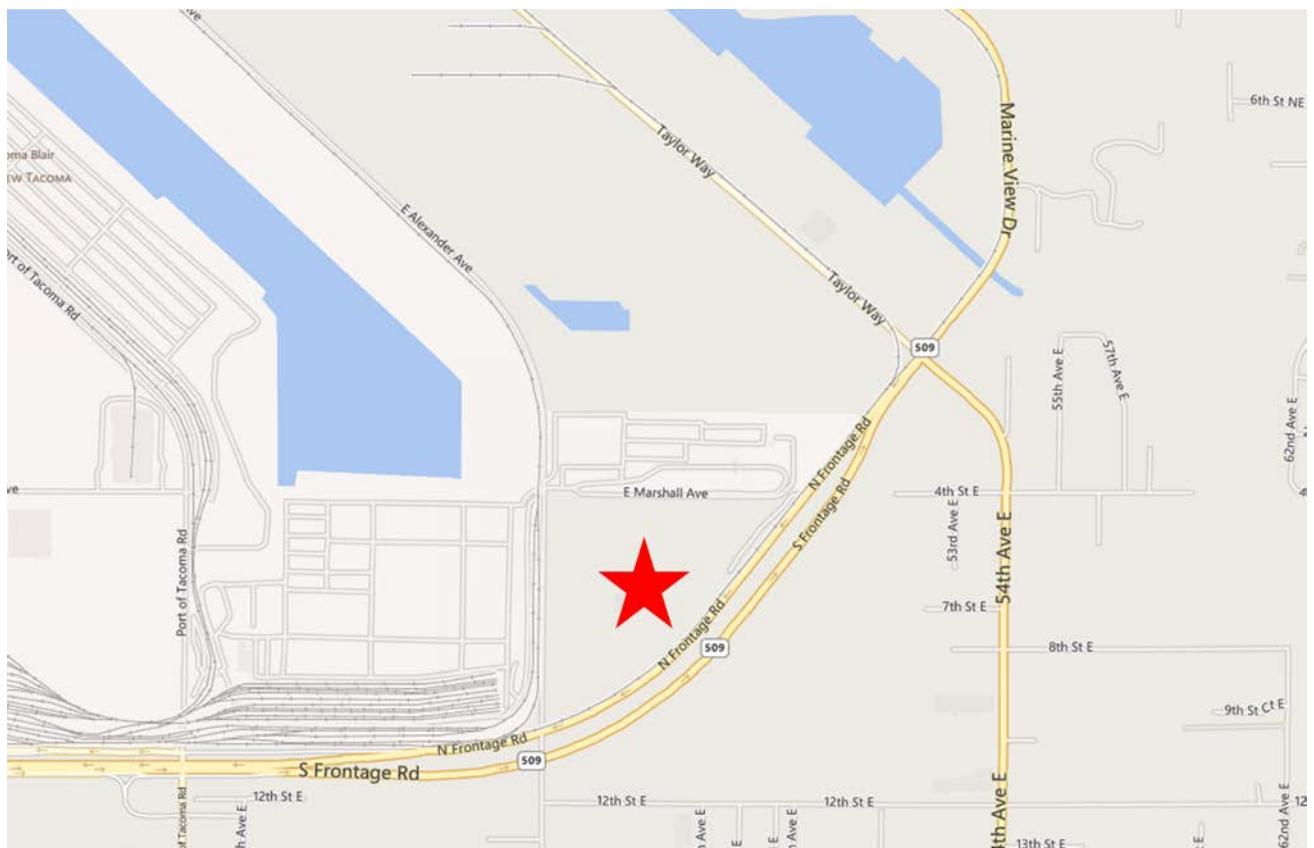


Figure 1. Location of Portac Inc. site

SITE BACKGROUND

The Port of Tacoma owns the property. Portac Inc. once ran a log yard and saw mill on the site. Portac Inc. placed waste, called slag, from the former Asarco smelter on the site as material to build a stable ground for running heavy machines and to store logs. Activities at the site crushed the contaminated waste into the ground.

Studies in the early 1980s showed heavy metals such as arsenic, copper, lead, and zinc in soil and the waste material above cleanup levels. In 1988, the port and Portac paved the log yard. This was done to prevent contamination from getting into surface water runoff leading into Wapato Creek and the Blair Waterway. The port and Portac Inc. also did groundwater monitoring for several years. Groundwater studies in 1992 showed arsenic in groundwater above state cleanup levels.

In 2009, Portac Inc. entered Ecology's Voluntary Cleanup Program to address remaining contamination from the former saw mill. Studies from these efforts showed that contamination remains in groundwater relating to the former sawmill and log yard.

Under a new agreement, the port and Portac Inc. will do site investigations to revisit the nature and extent of contamination (see current activity, below). More details about contamination may be known when investigations are complete.

You can find more information about these pollutants and their health effects at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/substances/index.asp> and <http://www.epa.gov>.

CURRENT ACTIVITY

Ecology is holding a public comment period on a draft agreed order (legal agreement) for the Portac Inc. site. The new agreed order requires the Port of Tacoma and Portac Inc. to draft: A remedial investigation report, which describes the nature and extent of contamination and a feasibility study, which evaluates cleanup options.

Ecology will respond to comments at the end of the comment period. If needed, Ecology can make changes to the agreed order based on public comments. If there are no major changes, Ecology will finalize the agreement. Then, following the schedule in the agreed order, the port and Portac Inc. will do the site investigation. This investigation may take several years to collect groundwater data. Once the investigation is complete, the public will have the chance to review and comment on the draft of the investigation report and feasibility study.

SITE CLEANUP PROCESS

Cleanup activities at Portac Inc. site fall under Washington's Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) and accompanying regulations (Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 70.105D and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-340). MTCA has procedures for cleaning up contaminated sites to standards that are safe for both human health and the environment.

Toxic sites are cleaned up in stages, described below. Each stage has a related report or plan that the public is invited to review and comment on.

Remedial Investigation & Feasibility Study (RI/FS) - The RI looks at the extent and type of pollution on the site. It also looks at possible human health and environmental impacts. The FS identifies and evaluates different cleanup options.

Interim Actions - Ecology may allow Interim Actions to partly clean up a site before the final cleanup plan is complete. If these occur, a comment period will be held on the work plan before actions take place.

Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) - The CAP describes the cleanup methods and how they will meet Ecology's cleanup standards. Based on the information in the RI/FS, Ecology selects a cleanup action. The CAP also takes into account public comments and concerns. CAPs require a public comment period.

Cleanup - Cleanup removes contaminants from the site, contains them on the site, or treats them to make them less toxic.

Delisting - Ecology keeps track of toxic cleanup sites on the Hazardous Sites List. Once cleanup is complete, the public will have a chance to comment before Ecology takes a site off the list.

You can find more information about toxic cleanups on Ecology's website:
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cu_support/cu_process_steps_defns.htm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of this Public Participation Plan is to promote public understanding and participation in the cleanup. This section of the plan describes how Ecology will share information and receive public comments on cleanup activities. Ecology will use the following public involvement activities during the Portac Inc. cleanup:

Formal Public Comment Periods

Comment periods are the primary method Ecology uses to get feedback from the public on proposed cleanup decisions. Comment periods usually last 30 days. WAC 173-340-600 requires them at key points during the investigation and cleanup process, before final decisions are made. During a comment period, the public can comment in writing. Ecology can only take verbal comments during a public hearing.

After comment periods, Ecology reviews all comments and may respond in a document called a responsiveness summary. Ecology considers whether a document or decision needs to be changed or revised based on public input. If there are major changes, Ecology may hold a second comment period. If there are no major changes, Ecology finalizes the draft document(s).

Public Meetings and Hearings

Ecology may hold public meetings at key points during the investigation and cleanup. Ecology also may offer public meetings for actions expected to be of particular interest to the community.

Ecology will also hold a public meeting/hearing if ten or more people request one. These meetings will be at places and times convenient to the public.

Information Repositories

These are places where the public can read and review site information, including public comment period documents. Ecology has two repositories for this site:

Tacoma Public Library, 1102 Tacoma Avenue S, Tacoma WA 98402. (253) 292-2001.
Citizens for a Healthy Bay, 535 Dock Street, Suite 213, Tacoma WA 98402. (253) 383-2429.
Washington State Department of Ecology, 300 Desmond Drive, Lacey 98516. Please call (360) 407-6045 for an appointment.

See also Ecology's website: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=3642>

Site Register

Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program uses its twice-monthly Site Register to announce public meetings and comment periods, and many other activities. To receive the Site Register by e-mail, contact Seth Preston at (360) 407-6848 or Seth.Preston@ecy.wa.gov. You can also read it on Ecology's website at http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/pub_inv/pub_inv2.html.

Mailing List

Ecology's mailing list for this site includes neighboring landowners and businesses, public agencies, and other known interested parties. Ecology's Southwest Regional Office maintains the list and will update it as needed. Please contact Stacy Galleher at (360) 407- 6255 or Stacy.Galleher@ecy.wa.gov if you would like to have your address added to or deleted from this mailing list.

Fact Sheets

Ecology will mail fact sheets to people and groups interested in this cleanup. Fact sheets will announce comment periods and public meetings. Ecology also may mail fact sheets with updates on cleanup progress.

Newspaper Display Ads

Ecology will place ads in *The News Tribune* in Tacoma to announce public comment periods and public meetings for the site.

Plan Update

Ecology may update this Public Participation Plan as the project moves forward. The public will have a chance to comment on any major changes to the plan.

Contacts

If you have questions or need more information about this plan or the Portac Inc. cleanup site, please contact:

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GLOSSARY

Agreed Order: A legal agreement between Ecology and a Potentially Liable Person (see below) to conduct work toward a cleanup.

Cleanup: Actions that deal with a release or threatened release of hazardous substances that could affect public health or the environment. Ecology often uses the term "cleanup" broadly to describe response actions or phases of cleanup, such as the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study.

Contaminant: Any hazardous substance that does not occur naturally or occurs at greater than natural background levels.

Groundwater: Water found beneath the earth's surface that fills spaces between materials such as sand, soil, or gravel. In some areas, groundwater occurs in large enough amounts to be used for drinking water, irrigation and other purposes.

Information Repository: A file containing site information and reports for public review. It is usually located in a public building convenient for local residents, such as a public school, city hall, or library.

Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA): A law passed by Washington voter initiative in 1988. Its purpose is to find, investigate, and clean up places where hazardous substances have been released. It defines Ecology's role and encourages public involvement in cleanup decisions.

Potentially Liable Person: Any individual(s) or company(s) potentially responsible for, or contributing to, the contamination problems at a site. Whenever possible, Ecology requires PLPs to clean up sites.

Risk: The probability that a hazardous substance, when released into the environment, will cause an adverse effect in the exposed humans or living organisms.

Sediments: Settled particles located at the bottom of a lake, river or in wetlands. Sediment(s) also includes settled particulate matter exposed by human activity (e.g., dredging) to the biologically active aquatic zone or to the water column.

Site: Any area where a hazardous substance, other than a consumer product in consumer use, has come to be located.

Toxicity: How much harm a substance causes to living organisms, including people, plants and animals, at a certain concentration.

Voluntary Cleanup Program: An option for cleaning up hazardous waste sites. The program allows a party to clean up a site independently with technical assistance and written opinions from the Department of Ecology on the cleanup.