Frequently Asked Questions: Pasco Landfill Cleanup

Drums of hazardous waste, now slated for excavation and proper disposal, being readied for burial in Zone A, circa 1972 or 1973.

More information

http://bit.ly/EcologyPascoLandfill

Contact information

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Special accommodations

To request Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation, or printed materials in a format for the visually impaired, contact the Ecology ADA Coordinator at 360-407-6831 or ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or visit ecology.wa.gov/accessibility. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Question 1 (Q1): What safety measures will be in place for the public and workers?

Answer 1 (A1): The site is secured with fencing and controlled gates to prevent unauthorized entry during cleanup operations. On-site security personnel will be present during non-work periods. Additionally, the Zone A drum excavation and removal work will occur under a temporary, moveable structure with an air treatment system. The temporary structure will be made of industrial fabric and supported by an aluminum or steel frame with doors on both ends to accommodate truck traffic (Figure 1). Air inside the structure will be monitored and cleaned with activated carbon prior to discharge. This will protect workers and eliminate most odors and emissions from the work area.

A detailed health and safety plan has been developed to protect workers. The plan includes protection measures for the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan also includes training for the assigned work; medical monitoring for all employees; using personal protective equipment such as respirators, chemical coveralls, gloves, and hard hats; and air-conditioned or heated rest areas for workers to cool down or warm up, depending on the season. Additionally, health and safety professionals will be on site full-time to perform health and safety monitoring and offer guidance and technical support to ensure that the workers and public are protected.

Perimeter air monitoring outside of the temporary structure will be conducted continuously during the excavation. Activities within the temporary structure will be modified in response to perimeter air monitoring results that indicate possible emissions from the work area.

An emergency response plan with contingency procedures was developed with local authorities and emergency services. A traffic plan, that will be coordinated with local businesses, will also be implemented.

Example temporary structures

Figure 1. A temporary structure will be constructed over Zone A to eliminate potential emissions from the work activities. See A1 for more details.

Q2: What types of emergencies could occur, and what happens in case of an emergency?

A2: The safety of the workers and the community at large is our first priority. The design, plans, and procedures for the Zone A cleanup activities were developed to eliminate or minimize situations that could evolve into an emergency. For example, a temporary structure will be constructed over Zone A to minimize potential emissions from the work activities (Figure 1). Stop work and/or appropriate contingency measures will be implemented whenever conditions warrant.

Prior to starting work activities, the contractor is coordinating with local and city authorities, including the Local Emergency Planning Council, Pasco Fire Department, Franklin County Fire District #3, Franklin County Emergency Management, Pasco Police Department, and Lourdes Medical Center. The emergency response plan addresses potential emergencies, including utility outages, severe weather, worker injury, environmental impact, and fire. Internal and external lines of communication will ensure the proper resources are deployed and Pasco-area first responders are notified in an emergency. These procedures outline the steps for immediate on-site response to minimize or eliminate impacts to worker safety, the environment, and the community at large.

Q3: Will the work create harmful gases or vapors that may affect workers or the surrounding community?

A3: Efforts to control and minimize harmful gases or vapors will include using vapor suppressants, material-handling procedures, and working under a temporary structure. Using the temporary structure equipped with an air treatment system is a significant proactive control measure that will help protect the workers and the community at large. A variety of elements in the health and safety plan will protect workers, including the use of respirators. See A1.

Q4: Could the Zone A drum removal cause another fire?

A4: The Zone A cleanup is designed to reduce the likelihood of a fire. Ground temperatures within Zone A and the gas composition in the soil-vapor extraction system are monitored. The number of drums exposed at any given time will be controlled through material-handling procedures.

Excavated 55-gallon drums that are still intact will be placed inside 85-gallon overpack drums to minimize vapor generation and the potential for spills. Foam suppressant will be used if needed to minimize vapor emissions from leaked drum contents. Pumpable liquids will be transferred to flame-resistant containers.

Continuous, real-time monitoring for flammable vapors will occur in the work zone. If such vapors exceed action levels, work activities will be modified to reduce or eliminate the vapor source(s) and corrective measures taken to control the source(s).

Q5: What kind of monitoring will occur? How will it be used to adjust or modify the cleanup work and keep workers and the community safe?

A5: Real-time air monitoring within the temporary structure and around its perimeter will occur using a variety of scientific instruments. This includes integrated sampling to analyze a variety of key chemicals and particulates. Work-area monitors will be used to protect the workers. Real-time air readings will inform decision-making on how and when work is performed and whether additional control measures may be needed.

The temporary structure's purpose is to reduce odors and emissions outside the work area. However, occasionally some odors may be detected outside the structure because people can smell certain contaminants even at very low concentrations. Perimeter air monitoring will help confirm that control measures are effective and that local air quality is not impacted by the cleanup activities. To achieve this monitoring goal, emission action levels will be established below regulatory limits. If these levels are exceeded, work activities will be modified or stopped to address the concern and corrective measures taken to control the emission source(s).

Q6: How long will the Zone A drum removal work take?

A6: It is anticipated that the Zone A drum removal will be performed over a 19-month period, with active drum removal activities accounting for approximately 12 of the 19 months (Figure 2).

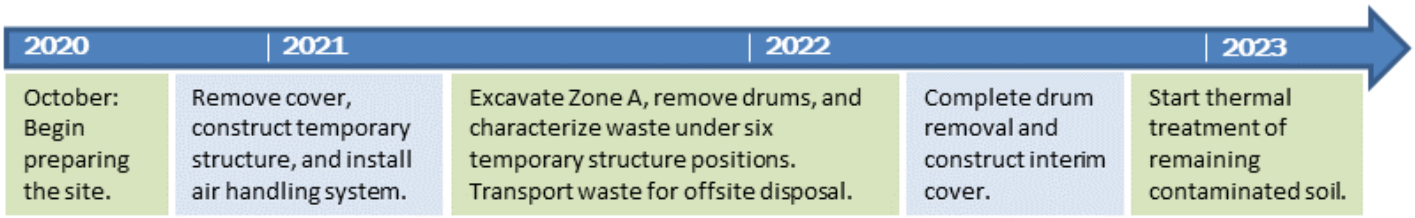

Figure 2: Zone A drum removal timeline.

Q7: How loud will the work be?

A7: The types of equipment used for the work will generate noises consistent with those of heavy construction equipment, truck traffic, and industrial ventilation.

Q8: During what hours will work occur?

A8: Work will occur between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. but may be adjusted depending on hours of daylight. Work inside the temporary structure may continue outside of these hours.

Q9: Will there be light pollution?

A9: Lighting will be along Dietrich Road for the safety of the community and for security personnel. The lighting will be comparable to what exists at the adjacent transfer station south of Zone A.

Q10: What are the transportation routes for trucks hauling waste for offsite disposal?

A10: Traffic activities will largely be restricted to Dietrich Road, the nearby frontage road (N. Commercial Avenue), and State Highway 12, located approximately one mile south of the landfill site. Offsite disposal facilities in Arlington, Oregon, and Grand View, Idaho, have been identified to receive Zone A dangerous wastes. Applicable U.S. and Washington State Department of Transportation standards will be followed for vehicles coming to and leaving the site. A traffic plan will prevent interruptions to local businesses, and a vehicle-tracking plan will ensure drivers comply with the prescribed transportation routes.

Q11: What happens if a vehicle transporting waste crashes?

A11: All trucks transporting waste will meet U.S. Department of Transportation requirements for transporting hazardous materials[1]. Drivers are specially trained and registered with state and federal authorities. The contractor and the transporter will have an emergency response company on standby to lead the response activities in the unlikely event that an incident occurs. Additionally, an emergency response plan with contingency procedures was developed with local authorities and emergency services prior to work beginning.

Q12: Can I still go to the transfer station that's next to the site?

A12: Yes, the Zone A drum removal is not anticipated to impact their operations.

Q13: How will the transfer station workers and patrons be protected?

A13: Air quality monitoring and traffic controls described in A1 and A10 will be implemented to protect transfer station workers and patrons.

Q14: Will Zone A truck traffic impact transfer station traffic?

A14: In coordination with the transfer station, the contractor has developed a traffic control plan that will be implemented during the work. Transfer station traffic will be given the right-of-way.

Q15: Will the trucks associated with cleanup damage the roads?

A15: Trucks hauling equipment and materials to and from the site will comply with all local, state, and federal laws, including truck weight limits.

Q16: Once the Zone A drums are removed, will the groundwater protection area still be necessary?

A16: The groundwater protection area is expected to stay in place until groundwater monitoring results show that it's no longer needed. Ecology will make the decision based on monitoring results, and this could be many years into the future.

Q17: After the drums are removed from Zone A, will the site be considered "clean"?

A17: After the drums, industrial waste materials, and other designated debris are removed from Zone A, an additional cleanup phase will occur at Zone A. Residual soil contamination and non-drum waste materials will be thermally treated. Once this cleanup phase is complete and a new cover system is installed over the area, active cleanup construction will be finished. Residual contaminants such as heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and possibly other types of organic compounds will remain in the Zone A subsurface. Groundwater monitoring and cover maintenance will continue well into the future to ensure that residual contaminants do not adversely impact groundwater. Site use and access will be restricted per Ecology regulations.

Q18: Will the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) be involved with the cleanup work because this is a Superfund site?

A18: In 1989, the EPA designated Ecology as the lead agency for this National Priorities List cleanup site. Ecology is responsible for ensuring that the work follows applicable laws, regulations, and standards, including the Model Toxics Control Act and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (or Superfund). We discussed the proposed cleanup with the EPA and will continue to update them as cleanup progresses.

Q19: How will the local community remain updated on the cleanup progress?

A19: Ecology posts updates on our website[2] and updates the community by mail when milestones are reached. If you have questions or comments, please contact us any time at PascoLandfill@ecy.wa.gov. Multiple people monitor this email account to ensure timely response. You may also call Site Manager Charles Gruenenfelder at 509-329-3439.

[1] 49 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 100–185

[2] http://bit.ly/EcologyPascoLandfill