



Frequently Asked Questions

Initial Site Assessment & Project Development

This reference document answers commonly asked questions about the Initial Site Assessment (ISA) for hazardous materials, and other project development issues.

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General Initial Site Assessment (ISA) Questions

1. Q: Where is the most current version of the Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Initial Site Assessment (ISA)?

A: The current version of the [Hazmat ISA](#) is on the Hazardous Materials Toolkit page of the Compliance Toolkit located on TxDOT.gov.

Note: The new version of the ISA is not retroactive; ISAs started before April 2016 may continue to use an older version or may switch to the newer form. All ISAs started after April 2016 must use the most current form.

2. Q: Is it necessary to create an Issues, Identification, and Resolution (IIR) Form in ECOS to track Asbestos and Lead-Containing-Paint issues under the current version of the ISA (Version 5)?

A: No, TxDOT acknowledges that asbestos or lead in paint may exist on the project (Section 2). TxDOT has procedures and processes in place to manage these issues.

3. Q: Would a drill shaft for a signal or light pole installation be considered a substantial excavation that triggers the Hazmat threshold criteria?

A: No, these activities would not be considered substantial excavations. Substantial excavation examples include excavations associated with:

- Underpass construction;
- Storm sewer installations; and
- Trenching or tunneling that would require temporary or permanent shoring.

Note: TxDOT Specification Item 402 Trench Excavation Protection (i.e. shoring) applies to trenches deeper than five feet.

There are occasions where contaminated soil or groundwater is encountered during the installation of a signal pole or light pole. Although contamination may be encountered, TxDOT's position is a single instance does not meet the definition of a significant environmental impact under 771.117(b) FHWA Categorical Exclusions. In these instances TxDOT's general specification Item 6.10 Hazardous Materials found in TxDOT's Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets, and Bridges (2014) would apply and contamination would be addressed and managed properly at the time of discovery by TxDOT or the contractor, if the contractor is willing and able to do so.

Unique project settings are always something to take into consideration during the planning stages of a project. For example, if signal poles will be installed in an intersection with known soil and groundwater contamination, then it is good judgment to develop a plan to manage any contamination encountered during construction. Another example is when a project calls for the installation of signal poles at an intersection that has or had one or more gasoline service stations; then it is good practice to perform a records review to determine if there is documented history of a release from the service station(s).

4. Q: Where can I find Sanborn fire insurance maps?

A: A limited selection of [Sanborn Maps](#) may be viewed from the University of Texas collection. Check with TxDOT's ENV Historic Resources section for other access options.

Note: Sanborn maps were published from 1867 to 1970 and include detailed maps for developed areas of many cities and towns. These maps may be helpful in identifying historical industrial land use and petroleum/chemical storage.

5. Q: How would I determine if geotechnical boring logs are available for my project?

A: The project design engineer should know if these are available.

6. Q: Does the database search have a shelf-life for the purpose of completing the Hazmat ISA?

A: Unlike an American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Phase I Environmental Site Assessment there is no specific "shelf-life" for the Hazmat ISA regulatory database search. However, if the project's design or right-of-way (ROW) requirements change an updated search may be appropriate. Also, if the project has significant excavation or ROW acquisition and approximately three years have passed an updated regulatory database review and visual surveys should be considered to identify new releases or waste sites. Contact TxDOT ENV for assistance.

7. Q: Do I have to conduct interviews for the Hazmat ISA?

A: No. However, when there are uncertainties about a site or corridor it can be beneficial to contact regulatory personnel, city officials, or "old-timers" at TxDOT regarding the history of a site. Consider coordinating with project ROW personnel prior to contacting any property owners.

8. Q: Does replacement of bridge rail trigger the need for an ISA?

A: Projects that are limited to bridge rail replacement as well as most other routine bridge repair work should qualify for the expedited (c)(22) categorical exclusion (CE) process. A Hazmat ISA is generally not required for these projects.

9. Q: What types of design changes might trigger revisions/reevaluations for a completed Hazmat ISA?

A: In general, a previously completed ISA must be revisited when changes to the project include:

- Changes to the project limits;
- Additional ROW or easements;
- Additional displacements (particularly commercial or industrial displacements);
- Substantial changes to land use (particularly new commercial or industrial development); or
- Substantial changes to the project design (as discussed below).

For hazardous materials, design changes that affect project excavation requirements are of particular concern. This would include any significant changes involving storm water ponds, storm sewers, trenches or tunnels deeper than about 5 feet, substantial lowering of the project grade (such as for an underpass), or any new excavation that might encounter groundwater.

Also, the length of time elapsed since the last hazardous materials assessment was completed should be considered in determining if the assessment should be updated. When more than

approximately three years have passed, updated regulatory database review and visual surveys should be considered to identify new releases or waste sites. Contact TxDOT's ENV hazardous materials team for project-specific assistance in determining if the Hazmat ISA needs to be revised or updated.

Issues, Identification & Resolution (IIR) Development Questions

1 Q: How do you complete an IIR form in the Environmental Compliance Oversight System (ECOS) when the Hazmat concern does not match the type of concern listed on the IIR form (examples: LPST, ACM, Oil & Gas, non-LPST)?

A: If you discover something not addressed under "Type of Concern" listed in Section 8 of the ISA, then the concern type you select in the IIR will be "Other".

For example, if during a site investigation a scrapyards is discovered that could potentially impact the proposed project but was not identified in any of the databases, then select "Site Visit Concerns" in the ISA (under 8.1 of the ISA) and select "Other" in the IIR (as mentioned in the ISA form).

2 Q: Can TxDOT ENV review an ISA and let me know if you agree with the assessment?

A: Yes. TxDOT ENV routinely reviews ISAs. Create a review task in ECOS and assign the review to the appropriate ENV staff person. ENV staff is also available to prepare the ECOS IIR Form. Simply upload the completed Hazmat ISA to ECOS then create a task, assigning the preparation of the IIR Form to the appropriate ENV staff member.

3 Q: When do you need to create an IIR for a project?

A: If issue(s) are identified during the ISA process that cannot be resolved during the ISA process, then IIRs must be developed to track the issue(s) to resolution. Detailed instructions are provided in the ISA.

4 Q: I determined there is a potential Hazmat issue on my project; how do I complete the IIR Form?

A: Detailed instructions for completing an ECOS IIR Form are located in the Non-Project Documentation section of ECOS under the heading Hazmat.

5 Q: How do I use the ECOS IIR Form to assign the Hazmat issues from identification to resolution?

A: Once the IIR form is created for an issue, the issue status can be updated as necessary. Use the description block on the IIR Form to record new information and use the IIR Form drop down menus to update the issue status.

If the responsibility for resolving the Hazmat issue will be transferred to someone that cannot be assigned within ECOS (Consultant, ROW staff, Design staff, etc.), record the transfer of responsibility for the issue resolution on the IIR Form. Maintain a record of the transfer of responsibility in the project file.

NEPA Document Questions for Hazardous Materials

1 Q: What are the general guidelines for preparing the hazardous material discussion in an EA or EIS?

A: See the guidance document [Hazardous Materials in Project Development: Environmental Documentation](#) posted to the Hazardous Materials Toolkit located on TxDOT.gov.

Note: The example language provided does not cover all possible scenarios and should not be used as "standard paragraphs" or "filler". The proper use of example language should be supervised by experienced staff and significant editing may be required to incorporate project-specific information.

Hazardous Materials Issues During Construction

1 Q: What if hazardous materials not identified during the project development process are encountered during project construction?

A: Under [Special Provision \(SP\) 006-012](#) (2014 Specifications), the contractor should notify the project engineer immediately if suspected hazardous materials are encountered during construction. The project engineer may completely or partially suspend work to allow for testing, removal, and disposal, unless the hazardous materials were introduced by the contractor. TxDOT is responsible for managing any hazardous materials (or waste) not introduced by the contractor.

ENV has standing non-emergency response contracts that can be used to manage most unanticipated Hazmat issues, including contaminated soil or groundwater, waste materials, or underground storage tanks. However, a "willing and able" prime contractor may also be used to address unanticipated contamination with coordination through TxDOT's Construction Division (CST) and as discussed in the William Hale memo dated April 9, 2018 titled "Mitigation of Hazardous Materials". The memo is located on the [Construction Division webpage](#) on Crossroads.

For hazardous materials emergencies in the ROW (ex. tanker spills) follow the procedures outlined in the [Emergency Spill Response](#) chapter of the Maintenance Operations Manual.

Contact the TxDOT's ENV hazardous materials team for guidance whenever unanticipated hazardous materials are encountered.

2 Q: What are Contractor and TxDOT responsibilities regarding Hazmat issues?

A: Contractor and State responsibilities for hazardous materials are addressed in the Texas Standard Specifications (2014) under Items 7.12 (Responsibility for Hazards) and [SP 006-012](#), which replaces Item 6.10 (Hazardous Materials).

Contractors are responsible for hazardous materials introduced by the contractor (Item 7.12). Contractors are also responsible for providing sufficient notice to allow the department to submit the 10-day demolition notification to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in accordance with SP 006-012. In addition, Item 7.3 (Laws to Be Observed) requires that the contractor perform work in compliance with all laws and regulations. This includes spill control and cleanup, hazard communication, and all other hazardous materials/waste regulations applicable to the work.

According to the specifications, TxDOT is responsible for testing, removing, and disposing of hazardous materials/contamination not introduced by the contractor, with the exception of paint removal work done under Item 446 (Field Cleaning and Painting Steel). Statewide TxDOT ENV consulting and remediation contracts are available to assist districts in managing hazardous materials at any stage of project development.

Situations arise where hazardous materials are identified and the hazardous material/contamination issue is so intrinsic with the construction work that the work cannot be separated. In this situation the work can be designed in the plans to be performed by the prime or a specialty sub-contractor working under the prime. Note that this method requires a district engineer to acquire approval of the director of district operations prior to including it in the plans in accordance with the memo from William Hale dated April 9, 2018 titled “Mitigation of Hazardous Materials”. This memo is on the [Construction Division webpage](#) on Crossroads.

For situations where hazardous materials are discovered during a project the William Hale memo states that the plans may be amended to allow the prime contractor to handle pre-existing contamination when the contractor is “willing and able”. Note that this method will require coordination with Construction Division for verification and filing of insurance certificates.

3 Q: I know that asbestos and lead-containing paint on bridge structures can impact project planning and construction, but what other hazardous materials issues do I need to be concerned about?

A: In general, TxDOT should be concerned when potential hazardous materials sites may be acquired for new ROW, or when construction activities might encounter hazardous materials contamination or waste. Specific concerns that require special consideration for ROW include acquisition of sites with petroleum/chemical releases, petroleum/chemical storage (including underground tanks), and waste disposal sites. Additional Hazmat considerations are also needed when project construction activities (especially excavation or drilling) may encounter contaminated soil or water (usually groundwater), dump sites/landfills, or petroleum/chemical storage tanks encroaching into the project limits.

Early identification of hazardous materials concerns is a key to minimizing project delays and successfully managing hazardous materials. District environmental staff is trained in using TxDOT’s Hazardous Materials Initial Site Assessment (ISA) Report Form to identify potential hazardous materials concerns in the project development process. The ISA form may be found in the [Hazardous Materials Toolkit](#) located on TxDOT.gov. Consult with your district environmental coordinator or the TxDOT’s ENV hazardous materials management team for help in determining if a potential issue is a concern for a project.

4 Q: Can the project be let and can construction begin if there is a known, unresolved hazardous material issue affecting a portion of the project?

A: Whenever practical, hazardous materials issues including soil and groundwater contamination, waste materials/landfills, petroleum storage tank removals, and bridge asbestos or lead abatement should be resolved prior to construction. However, a project can be let and construction can begin with unresolved hazardous materials issues if necessary to advance the project, and with appropriate commitments and/or plans to address the concerns.

When contaminated soil, groundwater, or waste materials are expected to impact project construction, a specialty (remediation) contractor can be secured to manage contaminated media during construction. In some cases a detailed management plan and associated special



provisions and or plan notes must be developed during project design in order to properly address anticipated contamination and minimize the potential for construction delays. In addition, extra time or sequencing requirements may be included in the project plans to allow time for contamination issues or abatement work to be addressed.

For additional guidance about hazardous materials issues during construction refer to the memo from William Hale dated April 9, 2018 titled “Mitigation of Hazardous Materials”. The memo is available on the [Construction Division webpage](#) on Crossroads. In addition, please contact TxDOT’s ENV hazardous materials management team for project-specific assistance.

Appendix A: Revision History

The following table shows the revision history for this document.

Revision History	
Effective Date Month, Year	Reason for and Description of Change
November 2018	Version 1 was released.