

## Appendix [insert letter]: Brief Summary of ATSDR's Public Health Assessment (PHA) Process

ATSDR follows the PHA process to find out:

- Whether people living near a hazardous waste site are being exposed to toxic substances.
- Whether that exposure is harmful.
- What must be done to stop or reduce exposure.

The PHA process is a step-by-step consistent approach during which ATSDR:

- Establishes communication mechanisms, including [engaging communities](#) at the beginning of site activities and involves them throughout the process to respond to their health concerns.
- Collects many different kinds of [site information](#).
- Obtains, compiles, and evaluates the usability and quality of environmental and biological [sampling data](#) (and sometimes modeling data) to examine environmental contamination at a site.
- Conducts four main, sequential scientific evaluations.
  - [Exposure pathways evaluation](#) to identify past, present, and future site-specific exposure situations, and categorize them as completed, potential, or eliminated.
  - [Screening analysis](#) to compare the available sampling data to media-specific environmental screening levels (ATSDR comparison values [CVs] and non-ATSDR screening levels). This identifies potential contaminants of concern that require further evaluation for completed and potential exposure pathways.
  - [Exposure Point Concentrations \(EPCs\) and exposure calculations](#) for contaminants flagged as requiring further evaluation in completed and potential exposure pathways. It involves calculating EPCs, using the estimated EPCs to perform exposure calculations, and determining which site-specific scenarios requires an in-depth toxicological effects analysis.
  - [In-depth toxicological effects evaluation](#), if necessary, based on the three previous scientific evaluations. This step looks more closely at contaminant-specific information in the context of site exposures. This evaluation can also help determine if there is a potential for non-cancer or cancer health effects.
- Summarizes findings and next steps, while acknowledging uncertainties and limitations.
- Provides recommendations to site-related entities, partner agencies, and communities to prevent and minimize harmful exposures.

The sequence of steps can differ based on site-specific factors. For instance, health assessors might define an exposure unit before or after the screening analysis.

For more detail on the PHA process, please visit [Explanation of ATSDR's PHA Process Evaluation](#). Readers can also refer to [ATSDR's Public Health Assessment Guidance Manual](#) for all information related to the step-wise PHA process.