

*Are We Cleaning Up? 10 Superfund Case
Studies*

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ARE WE
CLEANING
UP?
10 SUPERFUND CASE STUDIES

A Special Report of
OTA's Assessment on
Superfund Implementation

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Foreword

In a few years, Superfund became part of the American vocabulary because so many people feel so strongly about toxic waste and cleanup of contaminated sites. They remain worried about environmental and health effects, but a new concern has come to the fore: the enormous amount of money and the long times to clean up an ever-growing list of Superfund sites. Yet, even while the public demands effective cleanups, nearly everyone speaking and writing about Superfund seems to feel that serious problems exist. And the focus of public attention has shifted from how much money ought to go to Superfund to how to achieve environmental results and efficiency. Right now there are more questions than answers about diagnosing and fixing Superfund.

Four committees of Congress asked the Office of Technology Assessment to assess how Superfund is being implemented under the 1986 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act. They asked OTA to examine a number of technical issues that arise near the beginning of the complex Superfund process. The study was to assess the impacts of statutory provisions and program policies on environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency. The requesting committees were: the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation and its Investigation and Oversight Subcommittee; the House Energy and Commerce Committee and its Oversight and Investigations, and Transportation, Tourism, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittees; the Subcommittee on Superfund and Environmental Oversight of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee; and the Subcommittee on Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources of the House Government Operations Committee.

During our Superfund Implementation assessment we realized that we could learn much by finding out how sites progress through the Superfund program and how—and when—critical decisions about their cleanup are being made. Before we could answer tough but general questions about making Superfund work better, we had to know more about what was actually going on. This special report presents 10 case studies of recent Superfund decisions at sites which OTA believes, from surveying over 100 recent cleanup decisions, to be representative of a broad range of contamination problems and cleanup technologies. We hope that everyone affected by Superfund can learn as much as we have from these case studies.

Many people have helped OTA with these case studies, especially Environmental Protection Agency staff around the country who provided us with primary information about the sites. Several companies that are responsible parties at sites also provided key documents. Responsibility for the contents of this document, of course, rests with OTA,



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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents,

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