

MTCA Requires Hazardous Waste Sites be Ranked

Every hazardous waste site in Washington is unique and poses a potentially different type and level of risk to human health and the environment. The Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) requires these sites to be ranked relative to each other to guide Ecology's use of cleanup resources. Working with the Science Advisory Board, Ecology developed a ranking system for hazardous sites known as the Washington Ranking Method (WARM).

Ecology ranks a site after the agency gathers enough information to complete a site hazard assessment (SHA). Owners and operators and any other potentially liable persons (PLPs) known to the agency are notified when their site is ranked and placed on Ecology's Hazardous Sites List. Additions to the list are announced twice each year.

What Does the Washington Ranking Method Do?

A site's potential threat to human health and the environment is estimated using the data gathered during the SHA. The WARM categorizes sites on the basis of this information. Sites are ranked on a scale of one to five, with a score of one representing the highest relative level of concern, and five the lowest.

The WARM is designed to:

- Provide a consistent, objective means of assessing sites.
- Establish a scientifically defensible method of evaluating sites.
- Maximize accuracy with minimum data.
- Provide adequate distinction between sites.

How Will the Rankings be Used?

It is important to keep in mind that hazardous site ranking is not the same as risk assessment. Rather, it is an estimation of the potential threat posed by a site relative to all other ranked sites in the state. An actual assessment of a site's health risk is determined after detailed data has been gathered through a remedial investigation.

The WARM provides a framework in which to organize and compare sites. However, it is not the only factor used to determine which sites receive priority for Ecology's resources. Other considerations include the availability of funds, the potential cost of cleanup, the level of cooperation shown by a responsible party, and public concern about a site.

How Does the Washington Ranking Method Work?

When ranking a site, Ecology considers the primary routes through which humans or the environment could be exposed to hazardous substances found on that site. These routes include air, surface water and ground water. For each "exposure route," the following information is evaluated to determine the relative risk posed by each site.

<u>Substance Characteristics</u>	<u>Site Characteristics</u>	<u>Exposure Potential</u>
Toxicity of substance	Migration potential	Population
Quantity of substance	Soil permeability	Sensitive environment
Mobility of substance	Average rainfall	Surface water uses (drinking water, irrigation, fisheries)
Containment	Flood plain	
	Terrain slope	
	Distance to ground water	Ground water uses

What is the Relationship Between the WARM and the Federal Hazard Ranking System?

The Federal Hazard Ranking System’s purpose is to nominate hazardous waste sites with high federal scores to the National Priorities List (NPL). The federal system is used to set cleanup priorities for the Environmental Protection Agency. The WARM is not intended to duplicate the Federal Hazard Ranking System model. The purpose of WARM is to help Ecology set priorities for sites not on the federal list.

How Can I Get More Information?

For additional information on the Washington Ranking Method, contact the Department of Ecology, (360) 407-7170), Toxics Cleanup Program, P.O. box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600. You may also visit the Ecology website at www.ecy.wa.gov and click on *Programs* then *Toxics Cleanup*. For information on the cleanup process and cleanup definitions visit:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cu_support/cu_process_steps_defns.htm, or for information on a specific site, please contact the appropriate regional office listed below.

Central Region (<i>Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Yakima</i>)	15 West Yakima Ave, Suite 200 Yakima WA 98902-3452	509/575-2490
Eastern Region (<i>Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman</i>)	N. 4601 Monroe, Suite 100 Spokane WA 99205-1295	509/329-3400
Northwest Region (<i>Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom</i>)	3190 160 th Ave SE Bellevue WA 98008-5452	425/649-7000
Southwest Region (<i>Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum</i>)	P O Box 47775 Olympia WA 98504-7775	360/407-6300

This focus sheet is intended to help the user understand the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) Cleanup Regulation, Chapter 173-340 WAC. It does not establish or modify regulatory requirements.

Special accommodations: To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired call the Toxics Cleanup Program at 360-407-7170. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.