



PHASE I - ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENT (ESA)

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is a non-intrusive environmental investigation used to identify potential contamination associated with a property. It is typically conducted before property acquisition, redevelopment, financing, or brownfields cleanup projects. A Phase I ESA does not include soil, groundwater, or building material sampling. Any Phase I ESA more than 6 months old may need to be updated.

FOUR COMPONENTS OF A PHASE I ESA

RECORDS REVIEW

Environmental professionals review historical aerial photographs, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, City directories, topographic maps, and Federal and state environmental databases.
Identifies: Past uses that may have resulted in contamination

SITE RECONNAISSANCE

A site visit is conducted to observe stained soil, storage tanks, drums or waste materials, distressed vegetation, and evidence of spills or releases.
Identifies: Visible signs of environmental concerns.

INTERVIEWS

Environmental professionals may interview current property owners, occupants, or operators, former owners, and local government officials.
Identifies: Information not available through records alone.

EVALUATION & REPORTING

Findings are summarized in a report that identifies Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs), Historical RECs (HRECs), Controlled RECs (CRECs), data gaps, and recommendations for next steps. The report is prepared by a qualified Environmental Professional.

STANDARDS

CERCLA Liability Protection
Completing a Phase I ESA helps purchasers meet the "All Appropriate Inquiries" (AAI) requirement under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

ASTM Standard
Phase I ESAs are conducted according to ASTM E1527-21, the industry standard for environmental due diligence.

State-level Standards
A Phase I ESA helps satisfy environmental due diligence requirements that may be established by state agencies and programs.

Other Federal Funding Programs
A Phase I ESA may be required to support environmental review requirements for federally funded projects, including those involving HUD, USDA and, SBA.

WHY CONDUCT A PHASE I ESA?

- ✓ Identify potential environmental liabilities
- ✓ Support property transactions and redevelopment
- ✓ Meet lender or grant requirements
- ✓ Help qualify for federal liability protections under CERCLA
- ✓ Determine whether additional investigation is needed
- ✓ Critical prerequisite for further investigations

The key first step for Brownfields redevelopment, which can be funded through EPA grants.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A PHASE I ESA

No Environmental Concerns Identified
No further environmental investigation is recommended.

REC Identified
Potential contamination concerns are identified and additional investigation may be recommended.

Phase II ESA Recommended
If contamination is suspected, soil, groundwater, vapor, or building material sampling may be conducted during a Phase II ESA.

PHASE I ESA DOES NOT INCLUDE SAMPLING

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