

What are Phase I and Phase II ESAs?

Potential contamination varies from site to site depending on past uses.

These can include sites that were formerly:

- Gas stations, body shops, or salvage yards
- Dry cleaners
- Railroads and rail yards
- Factories and industrial storage facilities
- Buildings that contain asbestos

Sometimes, simply the perception of contamination is enough to create a barrier to redevelopment. When that happens, a site is considered a brownfield.

Two types of [Environmental Site Assessments \(ESAs\)](#) are available to determine the extent of contamination. In some cases, assessment reveals that a site does not pose a hazard and requires no remediation.

- **A Phase I ESA** can identify the likely presence and general types of suspected contamination. It is a non-intrusive process that involves visiting the site, conducting a records search, and speaking with those familiar with the site to identify areas of potential contamination or Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs).
- **A Phase II ESA** is conducted if a Phase I test determines further investigation is needed. It involves taking soil and water samples to identify types and concentrations of contamination and areas that may require cleanup.



Basic brownfields definition

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines brownfields as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”



Phase I testing generally costs between \$2,500 and \$5,000.

Phase II testing generally costs between \$10,000 and \$80,000.

ECIA recently won a grant from the EPA to cover the cost of these assessments. Your site may qualify.

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The owner of a site must give written consent before any assessments can occur.

Fears about contamination and liability for cleanup can prevent some owners from signing an access agreement.

However, Phase I and II ESAs have benefits for property owners:

- ESAs can increase the marketability of a site in the future. Most banks will require proof of a Phase I ESA prior to issuing a loan for purchasing a brownfield site.
- ESAs provide a clear understanding of what hazards may be on site and what is needed to eliminate or manage the issues. This can clarify and reduce risk for purchasers.

What happens if contamination is uncovered through site assessment?

The owners are responsible for the cleanup if they contributed to the contamination. Funding may be available to help property owners who did not cause the hazard.

Addressing hazards takes many forms.

In many cases, monitoring may be all that is required if contamination is found. In other cases, contaminated areas may be capped or future uses such as residential development may be restricted. In a very small percentage of cases, remediation may be required.

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