

Questions and Answers

Sask GeoHub and Environmentally Impacted Sites

Q1: What is an environmentally impacted site?

A: *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010* (the Act) defines an environmentally impacted site as an area of land or water that contains a pollutant that may cause or is causing an adverse effect. An adverse effect is an impairment of or damage to the environment or harm to human health, caused by any chemical, physical or biological alterations or any combination of them.

The ministry deals with many environmentally impacted sites involving petroleum hydrocarbons, such as leaking underground storage tanks. Other examples of pollutants include industrial waste, herbicides and pesticides, as well as less obvious ones like fertilizer or potash. See [Environmentally Impacted Sites GeoHub site](#).

Q2: What is a discharge site?

A: A discharge/release/spill is when a pollutant may cause or is causing an adverse effect or meets the criteria set out in the [Discharge and Discovery Reporting Standard](#). It must also be reported in a relatively short time frame and the cause is known or is occurring at the time of the report. See [Discharge Case \(Spills\) GeoHub site](#). The discharge site is the location where the spill took place.

A discovery or historical discharge is when a person discovers a pollutant where there is no record of a spill that may cause or is causing an adverse effect. It could also be a pollutant that is in a quantity or concentration that could pose a serious risk to the environment or public health and safety, or meets the criteria set out in the [Discharge and Discovery Reporting Standard](#). In this scenario, the cause of the impacts may not be known, as well as when the pollutant was released.

Q3: What is a contaminated site?

A: A contaminated site is the same as an environmentally impacted site. The ministry uses the term impacted site for those sites regulated under the Act and the Saskatchewan Environmental Code (the code).

Q4: Why don't the impacted sites include recent spills, landfills or industrial facilities that are contaminated sites?

A: Information on discharges is available on the [Discharge Case \(Spills\) GeoHub site](#). The ministry manages discharges (spills) differently than long-term impacted sites, which includes different record keeping and tracking processes. A spill that takes a long time to remediate could remain as an impacted site for a longer time, but since the origin of the impacts are a result of a spill, it will continue to be tracked as such and appear on the Discharge Case (Spills) GeoHub site. However, very few modern discharges remain impacted sites for any significant length of time as corrective action plans are typically initiated soon after a discharge occurs.

Impacts from industrial facilities and landfills are managed by different regulations and utilizing comprehensive construction, operating and decommissioning approvals for a variety of activities at the sites, so they're not included. However, the locations of landfills are available on [other maps](#).

Discharge events at operating landfills and industrial facilities are reported and recorded similarly to all other discharges and will continue to be recorded in the ministry's [Discharge Case \(Spills\) GeoHub site](#).

As long as there are regulatory mechanisms for operating facilities and activities, such as other legislative requirements, approvals or permits, the impacts will be reported and tracked outside of the impacted sites GeoHub layer, as the management of these impacts will be ongoing and be part of the operation, decommissioning and reclamation of that facility.

Q5: If a site has multiple pollutants, how does this appear on the map?

A: They appear as multiple records at the same location with the same case ID number.

Q6. GeoHub shows a total number of records – is this the total number of impacted sites in Saskatchewan?

A: No. The number of records shown on GeoHub is a count of each confirmed pollutant at each impacted site. For example, a site may be impacted by four different types of pollutants. Each pollutant will be counted as a separate record; therefore, the impacted site will have four records but it's still just one impacted site.

Q7: Does the Case ID number correlate with the date the impacts were reported?

A: No, the number is the date the impacts were entered into the system. It is not the date the site became impacted, nor the date when it was reported.

Q8: Does an impacted site get removed from the map once it's cleaned up?

A: No, but its status would change to Notice of Site Condition. The site will also receive a Notice of Site Condition (NoSC) certificate that indicates the environmental status of the site, and that the site has been cleaned up and any remaining risk will be managed. There may be conditions on the certificate that ensure any risks from the remaining impacts are managed into the future. A NoSC certificate may no longer be valid when activities, conditions or controls on the site change, resulting in a different environmental status from when the site assessment and/or corrective actions took place.

Q9: Terms and definitions

Object ID: An internal GeoHub record ID number. This number can be ignored.

Case ID: The Case ID is the ministry's file number – a unique identifier. It is NOT the date the site became impacted.

Status – The stages of management for an environmentally impacted site.

- **Notification:** The ministry has received notification that pollutants have been discovered at the site. The concentration of this pollutant exceeds the threshold outlined in the Saskatchewan Environmental Code and must be reported. The pollutants may cause an adverse effect to the environment or human health. The ministry has been made aware of this and has determined that the site is an environmentally impacted site.
- **Assessment:** The site is currently undergoing, or has recently completed, analysis to determine the cause, nature or extent of potential or existing adverse effect (e.g. a Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment).

- **Corrective Action Plan:** The site is currently undergoing, or has recently completed, activity that aims to prevent, minimize, mitigate, remedy or reclaim adverse effects (e.g. removal of impacts by excavation).
- **Closure:** This is a historical status term for environmentally impacted sites that is no longer used. The Notice of Site Condition status replaces the former status of Closure. It indicates that corrective actions have been completed at the site, endpoints have been achieved and an updated environmental status of the site has been provided to the ministry. However, no application has been made for a NoSC certificate.
- **Notice of Site Condition:** The ministry is satisfied that an acceptable risk level exists for the area of the site addressed in the corrective action plan.

Confirmed substance: The substances of concern at the site. Examples that may cause an adverse effect are petroleum hydrocarbons, toxic metals, air pollutants, acids and solvents.

Q10: What substances are considered petroleum hydrocarbons? How are they displayed on the map?

A: Petroleum hydrocarbons are the most common pollutants discovered and consist of many different elements and chemicals. Often a site is impacted by multiple chemicals or pollutants that can be generalized as petroleum hydrocarbons. The individual pollutants that are causing the impacted site are known but may be identified by the ministry as petroleum hydrocarbons. For example, an old retail gas station that had leaking underground storage tanks may have leaked gasoline and diesel, resulting in impacts generalized as petroleum hydrocarbons.

Petroleum hydrocarbons, may include, but are not limited to:

- Petroleum hydrocarbon-impacted soil
- Gasoline, motor spirit or petrol
- Diesel fuel, fuel oil, gas oil or heating oil
- Benzene
- Toluene
- Ethylbenzene
- Xylenes

Q11: There are thousands of sites on the map. Should we be concerned? / What is the Government doing about all these impacted sites? / When will all these sites be cleaned up?

A: The sites indicated on the map are a result of years of activity and are a demonstration of the work being completed to address the requirements of managing an environmentally impacted site in Saskatchewan. As more and more environmentally impacted sites are identified or discovered, the number of sites on the map will increase. It does not mean that the risk of these sites has changed, but it is an indication of how the responsible parties and the ministry continue to manage these sites. The ministry is working with the persons responsible and all affected persons to manage these sites through the process of assessment, corrective actions and issuing of NoSC Certificates. The process can be fast for some sites but may take many years for others.

The ministry will continue to regulate environmentally impacted sites to ensure that responsible parties are addressing high-risk sites and managing their sites according to the Act and the code, while protecting the environment and the public.

The map includes sites that have been cleaned up, as well as sites that haven't been cleaned up yet. If sites do not pose a high risk, the ministry allows responsible parties to manage sites on their own timeline.

Q12: Why were these impacted sites made public now?

A: The ministry has several data sources with information about impacted sites, which were provided on request. Modernization of the data systems allows for these records to be made available online, so that the public can more easily access this information.

The launch of the GeoHub site fulfills a commitment made by the Minister to have these records available in a more user-friendly manner.

Q13: What information is available on GeoHub and why is just this information available?

A: The information available on each incident includes: the discharge case identification number, discharge type, confirmed substance, status and the location on a map.

The ministry considers this the first step to making information on impacted sites more readily available to the public. There are many considerations before this can be accomplished, including how to make this information public, what information can be made available, privacy considerations and overall information integrity, security and accuracy.

Q14: Who do I contact for more information on a particular site?

A: Additional information on a specific site can be obtained by submitting an [Access to Information request](#) as per *The Freedom of Information and Protection Act*. Please cite the Case ID on your Access to Information Request form.

Q15: What do I do if there is an impacted site beside my property?

A: You do not have to do anything. The reason there is an identified site on the map is because there has been information submitted to the ministry regarding the impacts, which could include notification, assessment and/or corrective action plans regarding the site.

In addition, if that site resulted in impacts to neighboring properties, there is a requirement in the code that responsible parties must notify affected landowners.

Please contact our general inquiries line at 1-800-567-4224 or centre.inquiry@gov.sk.ca for general information on spills and impacted sites.

If you would like more information on a specific site, submit an [Access to Information request](#) as per *The Freedom of Information and Protection Act*. Please cite the Case ID on your Access to Information Request form.

Q16: What do I do if I suspect a property is an environmentally impacted site and it is not on the map?

A: If there is an active and ongoing discharge to the environment that may or is causing an adverse effect, please report the incident to the ministry using the 24-hour Environmental Emergency Spill Control line at 1-800-667-7525.

If you suspect that you have discovered a pollutant that is in a quantity or concentration that could pose a serious risk to the environment or public safety, please call the 24-hour Environmental Emergency Spill Control line at 1-800-667-7525.

If you are completing an environmental site assessment on your property and discover environmental impacts, please notify the ministry by submitting a [Discovery Report form](#).

You can also find additional information on how to manage an impacted site, as well as information on the code and technical guidance on impacted sites.

Q17: What do I do if my property is identified, and I was not aware of this previously?

A: It may be that a previous owner or occupant of the property discovered some impacts on the property. You should contact the previous owner, occupant or lessee of the property to try to find out any additional information or history on the property. The ministry will also provide you with additional information on a specific site via an [Access to Information request](#), as per *The Freedom of Information and Protection Act*. Please cite the Case ID on your Access to Information Request form.