

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup Program

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program was created in 1988 to encourage the investigation, cleanup, and redevelopment of contaminated properties. Every year, about 200 sites enter the program. Those who want to redevelop contaminated land turn to the VIC program as a partner in what is often a lengthy and complex process extending over multiple years due to the redevelopment goals and the environmental and administrative complexity of the project. Project managers and technical staff in the program provide guidance, review and approve work plans, investigation reports and clean-up plans, and evaluate the success of the cleanup.

The investigations are typically conducted in a phased approach and generate information to determine the nature and extent of contamination and any necessary cleanup. After the property has been fully investigated, a Response Action Plan is developed, which presents the proposed clean-up plan for the property. The clean-up plan is designed according to the property's intended use, such as residential, industrial/commercial, recreational, or some combination thereof. Each property has its own unique situation, and providing rigid deadlines for completion of various phases is unrealistic.

The MPCA staff makes every reasonable effort to review and respond to submitted reports within 30 to 60 days upon receipt of the report. The review time will depend on the quality of the report, and the complexity of the information the report contains.

As the contamination is defined, careful consideration is given to public information needs. At a minimum, local units of government are apprised of the findings of the investigations and any necessary cleanup. If there is strong community interest, or if potentially significant risk to public health is discovered, the MPCA will work with local units of government and other state agencies to provide the public with news releases or hold public information meetings.

Participants in the VIC Program are expected to cooperate and follow MPCA guidance in the investigation and clean up of the contamination. The VIC Program is a fee based program; participants are required by statute to reimburse the MPCA's costs of providing assistance.

The process usually concludes with good news for all: property owners may receive a legal release of liability and/or environmental closure for the identified contamination, cities benefit from an increased tax base, neighborhood blight is reduced, and the MPCA achieves a cleaner environment and the recycling of land in lieu of development on "virgin" land.