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What is Superfund?

Thousands of contaminated sites exist nationally due to hazardous waste being dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed. These sites include manufacturing facilities, processing plants, landfills and mining sites.

In the late 1970s, toxic waste dumps such as [Love Canal](#) and [Valley of the Drums](#) received national attention when the public learned about the risks to human health and the environment posed by contaminated sites.

In response, Congress established the [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act \(CERCLA\)](#) in 1980.

CERCLA is informally called Superfund. It allows EPA to clean up contaminated sites. It also forces the parties responsible for the contamination to either perform cleanups or reimburse the government for EPA-led cleanup work.

When there is no viable responsible party, Superfund gives EPA the funds and authority to clean up contaminated sites.

Superfund's goals are to:

- [Protect human health and the environment by cleaning up polluted sites;](#)
- [Make responsible parties pay for cleanup work;](#)
- [Involve communities in the Superfund process; and](#)
- [Return Superfund sites to productive use.](#)

Learn more about [the process EPA uses to clean up Superfund sites](#).

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