

## The Report

The report of findings should thoroughly document all investigations and evaluations conducted during the ESA. While the report format may vary among REAs, the following information should be included:

- Summary
- Introduction
- Site description
- Records review
- Information obtained from the site reconnaissance and interviews
- Findings and conclusions
- Signatures of environmental professional(s)
- Assessor stamp (for Registered Environmental Assessors)
- Qualifications of participating professionals

You have a right to a thorough, high quality product from any contractor performing an ESA for you.

## What You Can Do

Selection of an environmental assessor may be one of the most important decisions you make. Contacting our office will assist you in making your selection of a contractor to perform this vital service.

The Registered Environmental Assessor II is registered by DTSC to conduct and direct site mitigation and investigation activities at hazardous waste and hazardous substance release sites.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

We maintain records on all assessors in your region. For a list of Registered Environmental Assessors, contact us at:

**REA Hotline**  
**916-324-6881**  
Or visit [www.rea.ca.gov](http://www.rea.ca.gov)

Department of Toxic Substances Control  
Registered Environmental  
Assessor Program  
P.O. Box P.O. Box 806  
Sacramento, California 95812-0806  
Phone (916) 324-6881  
Fax (916) 324-1379



*Printed on Recycled Paper*

For questions, contact the DTSC office nearest you, or call the regional Public and Business Liaisons at (800) 72TOXIC (1-800-728-6942) or visit [www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov)

# Environmental Site Assessment

**PROTECTING YOUR CLIENT AND YOU!**



California  
Environmental  
Protection Agency



Department of  
Toxic Substances  
Control

---

## The ESA and You

Whether you represent a buyer, a financial institution making loans, an insurer issuing policies, or an are a property buyer, managing environmental liability is one of the most important issues you will face in commercial property transfers.

The Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) performed by a Registered Environmental Assessor (REA) is your primary means to ensure that all parties to the transaction are adequately protected from environmental liability by the “innocent landowner” defense. The “innocent landowner” defense under State and Federal Superfund laws requires that the purchaser perform an assessment using “all appropriate inquiry into the previous ownership and uses of the property consistent with good commercial or customary practices...” (42 U.S.C. § 9601(35)(B)).

## Objectives of the ESA

The ESA is a detailed evaluation designed to identify recognized environmental conditions that could present a hazard to users of the property or the environment. The ESA determines the presence or likely presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products on a property that indicate an existing release, a past release, or a material threat of a release into any structure, the ground, groundwater, or surface water at the property.

---

## The ESA Process

The ESA is typically conducted by an REA using standard practices developed by the American Society for Testing and Materials. There are typically four components to the ESA:

- Records Review
- Site Reconnaissance
- Interviews
- Report

## The Records Review

During the records review, the REA identifies conditions at the property. The records review depends upon publicly available, relevant documents accessible within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost. These may include title, permit, property tax and related documents.

The records review should also evaluate other properties within a reasonable distance, to help assess the likelihood that environmental problems at another location may affect the property.

The REA should collect and evaluate the following information:

- Federal, State and local environmental records
- Physical setting records
- Historical use records
- Prior assessments

---

## Site Reconnaissance

The REA performs site reconnaissance to identify the likelihood of recognizing environmental conditions in connection with the property. The REA should visually and physically observe the property and any structure located on the property to the extent possible. The assessor should observe the periphery of the property and the interior of any structure.

The REA should investigate, evaluate and note, to the extent possible, the following:

- Current and past property usage
- Current and past uses of adjoining properties and surrounding areas
- Geologic, hydrogeologic, hydrologic and topographic conditions
- Interior and exterior of structures
- Presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products

## Interviews

The REA should interview current and prior property owners and occupants to find out about recognized environmental conditions. The assessor should attempt to obtain information about the property uses and conditions from these individuals. Local government officials may also be interviewed during this process to obtain information about past inspections, complaints, or incidents in connection with the property.

*The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our web site at [www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov).*