Policy: 5525-1- Environmental Site Assessment Procedure
Section: Environmental Testing
Office/Department: Office of Materials
Reports To: Division of Construction
Contact: 404-608-4720

Introduction

During development, a project alignment may be proposed to go through an area which was once or is now a home to facilities used for the following:

Automotive Service/Gasoline	Automotive Repair	Automotive Boneyard
Waste Segregation	Dry Cleaning	Landfill
Waste Treatment and Outfall	Oil and Plastic Processing	Chemical Processing
Electrical and Electronics Processing	Paint and Plating Manufacturing	Photo Printing
Paper and Metals Processing	Adhesive Manufacturing	Battery Manufacturing
Mining	Waste Piles	Medical Supplies
Funeral Home	Asbestos or Other Contaminants	Agriculture

The above listed facilities should be treated as Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) and therefore must be thoroughly investigated to determine conclusively that no chemical releases or contamination from Hazardous Waste (HW) or petroleum products from an Underground Storage Tank (UST) or Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) system is present before any right-of-way is purchased. In addition, should a UST system which is active or was once used for gasoline, diesel, heating oil, or other chemicals is present within the existing or proposed right-of-way, proper removal of such UST system must occur prior to right-of-way acquisition.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) owns and leases real property. Hence, it may find itself subject to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended by Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) and Georgia's Hazardous Site Response Act (HSRA), commonly known as State Superfund. The State Superfund established funds to remediate uncontrolled HW landfills and to respond to releases into the environment. It also has an established process for identifying potential responsible parties and ordering them to take the appropriate actions. Regardless of whether a release or contamination is the result of GDOT's actions or by others, GDOT may be held responsible for the remediation from a release of hazardous substances once a real property is in its ownership. The risks of such potential liability can be significantly reduced by preventative steps taken via an Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) process prior to acquisition of any real property suspected to contain hazardous substances or petroleum products.

Environmental Site Assessment Procedure

During the preconstruction phase of a project, a Phase I ESA must be completed for projects with proposed new permanent right-of-way acquisition. Projects without any proposed permanent right-of-way acquisition, but are proposed to have ditching, utility work, installation of foundations or storm sewer, temporary construction easement at a suspected REC site, or other intrusive construction

activities that could encounter or potentially generate HW by removal of contaminated soils or UST should also have a Phase I ESA completed. Projects designated as Signal Upgrade, Low Impact Bridge Program (LIBP) or other projects with the approval of the Office of Materials and Testing (OMAT) shall be exempt from a Phase I ESA. The above criteria are for projects which are designed and or/managed by (but not limited to) the Offices of Program Delivery (OPD), Roadway Design, Bridge Design, Traffic Operations, the Transportation Investment Act (TIA), the District Design Offices, a consultant, as well as all alternative delivery projects.

The Project Manager (PM) has the choice to request the Phase I ESA be completed by the appropriate District Planning and Programming Liaison (DPPL) or from a consultant who is prequalified in Area Class 6.05 – *Hazardous Waste Site Assessment Studies*. Upon completion, the DPPL or the prequalified consultant provides a Phase I ESA report to the PM to transmit to the Environmental Testing Branch of OMAT. Unless otherwise approved by OMAT, all Phase I ESA investigations by a consultant shall follow the latest adopted version of the ASTM E1527 – *Standard Practice for Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process* or ASTM E2247 – *Standard Practice for Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process for Forestland and Rural Property*, and must be promptly submitted to OMAT for review upon completion. The Phase I ESA investigation report by a DPPL is a limited version of the one completed by a consultant which follows the ASTM standard. Unlike the consultant's Phase I ESA reports, acceptance letters are not issued by OMAT for the Phase I ESA reports by the DPPLs. Furthermore, a Phase I ESA should only be redone if there are expansions to the previously established right-of-way limits, shifts in the original alignment or other significant changes have occurred within the project corridor such as the addition of a new facility which can be categorized as a REC. The PM should contact OMAT for uncertainties regarding whether a Phase I ESA is required or needs to be redone for a project.

Findings of the Phase I ESA may result in a recommendation for a Phase II ESA. Therefore, a Phase I ESA must be completed and approved by OMAT before any Phase II ESA investigation (if recommended) can begin. The Phase II ESA typically includes invasive soil and groundwater sampling, field analysis and laboratory testing. If a Phase I ESA was performed by a consultant, OMAT recommends that the same consultant also perform the Phase II ESA. If this is not feasible, then the Phase II ESA may be completed by another prequalified consultant. Upon completion, the consultant shall provide the Phase II ESA report in accordance with the latest adopted version of the ASTM E1903 – *Standard Practice for Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Process* to the PM to transmit to the Environmental Testing Branch of OMAT. If the DPPL performed the Phase I ESA, the Environmental Testing Branch of OMAT shall perform the Phase II ESA (if required). Like the Phase I ESA report by the DPPL, the OMAT Phase II ESA investigation report is also a limited version of the one completed by a consultant which follows the ASTM standard. All reports shall be distributed to the appropriate offices upon approval. All courses of action will follow the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) guidelines in addition to the appropriate ASTM and GDOT guidelines.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has expressed concerns for the location of possible releases and monitoring wells in relation to GDOT projects. Therefore, all Phases I and II ESA investigations shall identify and reference the location of monitoring wells. Furthermore, any proposed impacts to monitoring wells, remediation systems, or other items that are part of an ongoing Corrective Action Plan (CAP), must be coordinated with the EPD by the PM, with the assistance of the Environmental Testing Branch and the Office of Environmental Services (OES).

Delineation of Responsibilities

The responsibilities of each office are described below. The responsibilities of the PM, OMAT, OES, Office of Right of Way (ROW), the DPPL, and consultants below should be executed during the project development phase, while those of the Construction and Maintenance Offices should be executed during the project implementation phase.

A. Project Managers

During project development, Project Managers are responsible for the following:

1. Requests a Phase I ESA with the start of the Environmental Resource Identification process of the Plan Development Process (PDP) for projects which qualify as defined in the *Environmental Site Assessment Procedure* section above. Projects which meet the exemption criteria should be ruled out earlier in the project phase – preferably during concept approval.
2. Requests a Phase II ESA (if recommended) after the Phase I ESA is completed and approved. The request should be done preferably at the start of the Technical Studies process of the PDP.
3. Transmits a copy of the final Phase I or Phase II ESA report, if performed by a consultant, to OMAT for review and approval.
4. Distributes the consultant report and OMAT's acceptance letter to the appropriated offices upon OMAT's approval. These offices typically include ROW, OES, District ROW, the DPPL, District Engineer (DE) and Area Manager (AM). A copy of the acceptance letter is also ~~be~~ sent to the consultant that prepared the report.
5. Addresses any recommendations made by OMAT or OES regarding the ESA in the plans.
6. Includes any special provisions or plan notes provided by OMAT or OES that are required to address any contamination issues in the final construction contracts.

B. Consultants

1. Performs the contracted Phase I ESA or Phase II ESA (if required) in accordance with this policy and Section 10 of the *Geotechnical* Manual located under the Manuals and Guides section of the Repository for Online Access to Documentation & Standards (R.O.A.D.S.)
2. Includes the applicable language and/or recommendations in the Phase I ESA report stating any further investigations required, and in the Phase II ESA report stating any further remediations or coordination required.
3. Submits all the necessary documents and files through the PM to OMAT. Consultants should be aware that ROW performs all lien and title searches during property acquisition and these tasks should not be included in the consultant's scope of work for an ESA.
4. Provides a limited Phase II ESA report to OMAT for each separate property found to have contamination levels above the regulatory release notification requirements as established by the EPD.
5. Prepares the required forms and documents and transmit to the EPD to inform them of the Phase II ESA findings within 30 days of the approval of the Phase II ESA report.

C. District Planning and Programming Liaison

1. Reviews project plans or layout and begins Phase I ESA investigation upon receipt of written request from a PM.
2. Performs an ESA Phase I in accordance with this policy and Chapter 10 of the *Geotechnical Manual* located on R.O.A.D.S.
3. Submits the completed Phase I ESA report promptly to OMAT for review. As previously stated in the "ESA Procedures" section above, acceptance letters are not issued for the DPPL Phase I ESA investigations.

D. Office of Materials and Testing

1. Reviews the Phase I ESA investigation by the DPPL for completeness and performs internal Phase II ESA investigations as requested and in accordance with Section 10 of the *Geotechnical Manual* located on R.O.A.D.S.
2. Transmits a copy of the final report to the PM. A copy is also sent to the DE, AM, ROW, OES, District ROW and the DPPL.
3. Completes review of Phase I or Phase II ESA for consultant reports. If the report is insufficient, incomplete or in need of revisions, a review letter is transmitted to the PM and consultant. If the report is acceptable for use in design, right-of-way negotiations and construction, an acceptance letter is transmitted to the PM. A copy of the letter is also sent to the DE, AM, ROW, OES and District ROW. Acceptance letters may include additional recommendations or action items for OES, ROW and the PM based on the ESA investigation. For all alternative delivery projects, a Statement of Concern letter is transmitted rather than an acceptance letter.
4. Notifies the EPD and real property owners to inform them of GDOT's findings for situations where contamination is found to be above regulatory release notification requirements established by the EPD.
5. Acts as a liaison between the GDOT and the EPD as necessary to get guidance on further remediation and/or obtain a "No Further Action" status for projects where contamination is above the regulatory release levels.
6. Coordinates any mitigation requirements or remediation activities which may be required as a part of the construction contract with the appropriate offices.

E. Office of Environmental Services

1. Incorporates the findings from the Phase I and/or Phase II ESA investigations into the Environmental Document.
2. Incorporates any commitments needed based on the findings from the Phase I and/or Phase II ESA into the Environmental Commitments Table (ECT). Right-of-way should not be authorized until the Phase I ESA has been completed or approved.
3. Assists the PM, ROW and/or OMAT, when requested, in the negotiation of impacts to monitoring wells, remediation systems, or other items that are part of an ongoing CAP required by the EPD.

F. Office of Right-of-way

1. Obtains a Phase I and/or Phase II ESA for any advance purchases.
2. Abstains from acquiring any real property that was recommended for further investigation in the Phase I ESA until the Phase II ESA has been completed or approved.
3. Addresses any recommendations made by OMAT or OES regarding the ESA during right-of-way appraisal and acquisition.
4. Coordinates any UST closures which may be required as a part of the right-of-way negotiations by utilizing a qualified consultant and adhering to the following:
    a. If a UST is determined to be present but not functional after right-of-way purchase, the appraisal would include a UST closure cost since the owner is responsible for its removal.
    b. If a UST is totally or partially located in the required right-of-way, GDOT shall be designated by the general terms of the agreement as an authorized agent for the removal of the UST system and will do so at no cost to the previous owner. However, the previous owner will remain solely responsible for the remediation costs for all contamination.

5. Notifies the PM to request a Phase II ESA be completed if any previously unidentified REC site(s) is/are discovered during right-of-way appraisal and acquisition.
6. Performs lien and title searches before the acquisition of any property.
7. Coordinates the completion of a Phase III ESA (remediation investigation) and/or Phase IV ESA (remediation/decontamination) for sites needing further remediation actions. Any Phases III and IV ESA work shall be completed only when recommended by the EPD or when OMAT has coordinated with the EPD or the appropriate agencies and the Phases III and IV work are deemed necessary by the EPD. The Phases III and IV work must be done with a qualified environmental consultant and a final Phase III and/or Phase IV report(s) should be provided to OMAT and any other applicable offices.

G. Offices of Construction and Maintenance

1. Follows proper protocol for all REC sites indicated on plans and/or construction contracts and plan notes.
2. Stops work in the immediate vicinity of newly discovered/suspected REC sites. Areas where suspected contamination exists should be closed off to prevent inadvertent access by workers or the public.
3. Reports any discovery of suspected UST or HW materials from REC sites to OMAT.
4. Adheres to the guidance for any removal of contaminated soils or solid waste including any HW as provided in the Standard Specification.
5. Adheres to the guidance for any removal of a UST system as provided in the Standard Specification. If unknown, OMAT should be contacted for guidance on the appropriate sections of the Standard Specification for handing or removal of UST systems, solid wastes, and contaminated soils.
6. Assists OMAT with the coordination of any mitigation or clean-up which may be required as a part of the construction contract due to unavoidable or unexpected involvement with a HW site or a site with a release from petroleum products.
7. Assists ROW with the coordination of any UST closures which may be required as a part of the construction contract.

Acronyms

AM – Area Manager

AST – Aboveground Storage Tank

CAP – Corrective Action Plan

CERCLA – Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

DE – District Engineer

DPPL – District Planning and Programming Liaison

ECT – Environmental Commitment Table

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

EPD – Environmental Protection Division

ESA – Environmental Site Assessment

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

GDOT – Georgia Department of Transportation

HSRA - Hazardous Site Response Act

HW – Hazardous Waste

LIBP – Low Impact Bridge Program

OES – Office of Environmental Services

OMAT – Office of Materials and Testing

OPD – Office of Program Delivery

PDP – Plan Development Process

PM – Project Manager

REC – Recognized Environmental Condition

ROADS – Repository for Online Access to Documentation & Standards

ROW – Office of Right of Way

SARA – Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act

TIA – Transportation Investment Act

UST – Underground Storage Tank

References:

Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process. ASTM E1527 – 21, ASTM International, 2021

Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process for Forestland and Rural Property. ASTM E2247 – 16, ASTM International, 2016

Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Process. ASTM E1903 – 19, ASTM International, 2020

Standard Practice for Limited Environmental Due Diligence: Transaction Screen Process. ASTM E1528 – 14e1, ASTM International, 2017

Environmental Site Assessment: Phase I Guidelines, Georgia Department of Transportation, 2022. *ROADS,* https://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/GeotechnicalManual/10.3.1%20Phase%20I%20Environmental%20Site%20Assessment%20Guidelines.pdf

Environmental Site Assessment: Phase II Guidelines, Georgia Department of Transportation, 2022. *ROADS,* https://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/GeotechnicalManual/10.3.2%20-%20Phase%20II%20Environmental%20Site%20Assessment%20Guidelines.pdf

Georgia Department of Transportation. "Section 217 — Removal of Underground Storage Tanks." *Standard Specifications Construction of Transportation Systems*, Georgia Department of Transportation, 2021

History:

fix broken link: 03/10/23;

combined 5525-1, Underground Storage Tank Procedures and 5525-2, Hazardous Waste (HW) Site: 01/19/05