

Summary of Key Terms

Superfund: Established as a trust fund on December 11, 1980 with an initial congressional authorization of \$1.6 billion, the Superfund finances various Environmental Protection Agency cleanup activities throughout the United States when a responsible party cannot be identified. The fund was formed under the legislative authority of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 and was later amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986.

CERCLA: More commonly known as the Superfund, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act went into effect on December 11, 1980. CERCLA established a tax on the petroleum and chemical industries and gave the Federal Government sweeping authority to investigate and respond to suspected and existing hazardous waste sites. This legislation also instituted the National Priorities List. The EPA determines which sites should be placed on the list and their priority. CERCLA also provides for a short-term or immediate response that includes removal and abatement of toxic, on-site substances and a long-term remedial response. In addition, this act sought to assign legal and financial accountability to those responsible for the release of hazardous substances at the sites.

SARA: Six years after CERCLA, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act was passed and an additional \$8.5 billion was allocated for the Superfund. As an amendment to CERCLA, SARA refined and broadened the scope of the Federal Government's power over hazardous waste issues. The act emphasized novel and permanent cleanup remedies while also promoting greater participation at the state level. Furthermore, the act called for greater citizen involvement in Remedial Design (RD) and Remedial Action (RA) phase of the cleanup process. These phases, where plans are set forth and implemented, are key to the cleanup process.

RCRA: In 1976, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act was passed as an amendment to the Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965. RCRA is a program that outlines proper management procedures for handling hazardous and non-hazardous wastes. The act also promotes conservation of energy and natural resources and suggests a variety of methods for reducing waste generation.

TSCA: Also passed in 1976, the Toxic Substances Control Act authorized the EPA to gather information on all existing and proposed chemical substances to determine whether or not they posed unreasonable health risks to the general public or significant risk to the environment. TSCA requires thorough testing and reporting of toxic substances and regulates their sale and use. Before TSCA, chemical substances required little if any testing prior to being used in the marketplace. Additionally, TSCA outlined methods and requirements for dealing with asbestos, radon and lead exposure.