



Difference between Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 Environmental Site Assessment.

by Pinaaz Rahman | Jun 1, 2020 | Environmental Site Assessment | 0 comments

Understanding Environmental Site Assessments (ESA)

The main reason consultants are hired for an ESA is to determine the safety and longevity of a property. It is important to carry out environmental due diligence when buying, selling, or even refinancing a property. Doing so ensures that all legitimate environmental and fiscal risks are mitigated.

Importance of ESAs for Commercial Properties

ESA's are especially mandatory when purchasing a commercial property because they help in recognizing the scope of the contamination and how to deal with it. Anyone from owners, tenants, and others who have or had "control" over a property can be held accountable for the contamination and breaching environmental laws.

Role of Environmental Due Diligence and Remediation

The consulting company's Environmental Due Diligence and [environmental remediation](#) team can assist in evaluating, managing, or removing any risks that are associated with the property. There are three phases to an environmental site assessment such as phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3. Phase 1 is a prerequisite for Phase 2 and so on for Phase 3. Phase 2 cannot be conducted without [performing a Phase 1](#) first unless it is known contamination has occurred

The differences between the Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 environmental site assessment(ESA) :

1. Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment :

involves a historical review, site reconnaissance, and interviews with relevant personnel before reporting. It is an evaluation of historical and current property use in order to point out any potential contamination that have or can occur. This is done by visual observations and knowledge gained through research on the property's previous uses. Information is also collected on neighboring properties because it can have a significant effect on the subject property. This phase also includes collecting all past ESA's of the subject property. Research is conducted using the information gathered, which will then be revised by a professional who will recommend the next steps of action according to the environmental conditions of the property. The first phase of an ESA does not involve any form of sampling, laboratory testing, or a physical analysis component. This first phase identifies if there is any possibility of contamination and concludes how it should be handled.

Also Read: [What is the next step if your Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has evidence of potential contamination?](#)

2. Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment:

If a possibility of contamination exists in a Phase 1 site assessment, the next step would be to move into phase ii esa. [Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment](#) addresses the concerns brought up in Phase 1 and involves an extensive investigation into the level of contamination. The purpose of Phase ii environmental assessment is to assess the presence or absence of hazardous substances on the surface. This is done by collecting soil and groundwater samples. As part of a Phase 2 site assessment, the samples are sent to accredited laboratories to be analyzed for contamination by comparing them to applicable soil, sediment, and groundwater remediation guidelines. This process will determine the extent of contamination and if remediation needs to be conducted to eliminate it. The process discussed above is consistent with a limited Phase 2 assessment. Limited phase ii esa is conducted to confirm the presence of contamination. Whereas a full comprehensive Phase 2 requires a substantial amount of investigation and testing to determine the extent of pollutants present. It evaluates the costs that would be needed for cleanup and analyzes if the pollutants have migrated to subsequent properties. Phase 2 ESAs tend to cost significantly more money than Phase 1 due to all the physical assessments, extra labor, and testing that are required. Along with that, depending on which phase ii esa is carried out, the time it takes to complete the project can also be longer.

Read Also : [What Are Environmental Site Assessments and How Are They Prepared?](#)

3. Phase 3 Environmental Site Assessment:

A **Phase 3 Environmental Site Assessment** is only conducted when contamination is found in Phase 2. Once contamination is discovered, an action plan has to be set in place for any remediation to occur. Phase 3 will closely analyze details regarding the contamination, such as the pathway of movement along with the **removal and disposal of the materials** that are contaminated. The first step in conducting a Phase 3 ESA is delineation, which basically determines the volume of the contamination and its boundaries. A lot of planning is required surrounding the approach of remediation, the time it will take to complete the project, and strategizing risk management. A Phase 3 assessment can take as little as a day if it is a simple excavation. However, that is a rare occurrence, and other remediation such as bioremediations can be months or years. It is important to realize that the process of cleaning up is unique to each project and its case. Therefore, the time it takes can vary, but removing the hazard should be more of a focus than how long it would take. The purpose of conducting a Phase 3 assessment is to simply remove any traces of contamination and return the site to a state where no such event occurs again. Lastly, as in all ESAs, a professional will document the work done and confirm that the contamination is removed.

Here we can see a table of differences between different phases, based on the description, key activities, goals, and costs.

Phase	Phase 1 ESA	Phase 2 ESA	Phase 3 ESA
Description	Involves historical review, site reconnaissance, and interviews before reporting.	Conducted if contamination is suspected from Phase 1.	Conducted only after contamination is confirmed in Phase 2.
Key Activities	– Historical property use evaluation- - Visual observations- - Research on past ESAs and neighboring properties	– Soil and groundwater sampling- Lab analysis of samples- - Assessment of hazardous substances	– Delineation of contamination volume and boundaries- - Development of remediation action plan

Goals	Identify potential contamination and determine handling steps.	Confirm presence/absence of contamination and extent of pollutants.	Remove traces of contamination and ensure site safety for future use.
Cost & Time Considerations	No sampling or lab testing. Typically quicker and less costly.	Higher costs due to extensive testing and longer duration for comprehensive assessments.	Duration varies significantly; could range from a day for simple excavations to months/years for complex remediation.

To request a Free Consultation [click here](#)



Pinaaz Rahman

Project Coordinator-Environmental at [prycoglobal](#)

Pinaaz is a Chemical Engineering graduate who has years of experience conducting Environmental Site Assessments. She studied at University of Alberta and brings a fresh perspective on projects. Pinaaz has an impressive background in process analysis/design and is our lead Environmentalist.

 [Share on Facebook](#)

 [Tweet](#)

 [Follow us](#)

Recent Posts

On-Site vs. Testing Facility Material Testing: Choosing the Right Approach for Construction Projects

The Importance of Material Testing in Construction

Unlocking the Advantages of Environmental Remediation Solutions

Environmental Remediation Across Industries: Beyond the Pipeline

Reserve Fund Study: Definition, Benefits, and Steps to Conduct

Categories

Building Condition Assessment

Construction Project Management

Cost Consultant

Environmental Site Assessment

Geotechnical Engineering

Material Engineering

Phase 2 ESA

Phase I ESA

Quantity Surveyor

Reserve Fund Study

Copyright © 2025 Pryco Global Inc. All Rights Reserved.